

Pakistan ready for talks with India

ISLAMABAD (R) — Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto told a meeting Sunday that Pakistan was ready for unconditional talks with India to solve the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, her foreign minister said. Bhutto spoke with politicians in Islamabad at a meeting called to discuss an Indian crackdown on a campaign for independence in the Himalayan state in which some 200 people have been killed since January. "We are ready for initiating a dialogue with India on the issue but not at the expense of our principled stand on Kashmir," Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan quoted Bhutto as telling the meeting. She said the dialogue could be without any preconditions, each side having a right to take any position on the issue. The two countries have fought two of their three wars since 1947 over Kashmir, two-thirds of which is controlled by India and the rest by Pakistan.

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Badran to head team to Sanaa talks

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Moudar Badran will head the Jordanian delegation to the Joint Jordanian-Yemeni Higher Committee meetings, which will be held in Sanaa Saturday. During the two day meetings the committee will discuss means of further developing scopes of cooperation between both countries.

New health insurance scheme in offing

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Cabinet has referred a new health insurance scheme to the Ministry of Finance and the National Medical Institution (NMI) for study and making necessary amendments in preparation for issuing it as a new law, according to well-placed sources at the Finance Ministry. The ministry, in cooperation with the NMI and the Royal Medical Services and other parties concerned, will formulate a new, more accurate and comprehensive law, capable of achieving justice among all categories of beneficiaries. The scheme had been prepared by the NMI.

Zakat may be used to help uprising

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ifta Council Sunday issued a fatwa, authorising the use of alms (zakat) to support the Palestinian uprising. The fatwa was issued in response to a request by Mamdouh Al Abbadi, secretary general of the Peoples National Committee for Supporting the Palestinian Uprising. General Mufti of Jordan Sheikh Jazuddin Al Khattab Al Tamimi communicated the fatwa to Dr. Abbadi, who had earlier asked for legal opinion in channelling alms money to families of martyrs and wounded in the occupied territories. The fatwa, which was issued after intense deliberations, authorised the payment of zakat money to those defending the holy places, the property and the dignity of the Muslim people.

Somalia invites human rights groups

MOGADISHU (R) — Somalia's new government has invited American congressmen, human rights groups and foreign journalists to visit the country to counter allegations of human rights abuses, it was announced Sunday. Foreign Minister Ahmad Jama Abdullah told a news conference that the government, formed last month, wanted to improve Somalia's international image and end internal conflicts. Abdullah said invitations had gone to the London-based Amnesty International, the American-based Africa Watch and other "interested groups" which had criticised Somalia's human rights policies.

Algeria legalises Ben Bella party

ALGIERS (R) — Algeria has legalised the opposition party of former President Ahmed Ben Bella, now in exile in Switzerland, the Algerian news agency APS said Sunday. The Movement for Democracy in Algeria (MDA) is the 21st opposition party to be legalised since Algeria embraced multi-party democracy last year. Town and provincial elections are to be held on June 12.

Kuwait denies presence of forged Iranian rials

KUWAIT (R) — A Kuwaiti newspaper Sunday quoted Interior Ministry officials as denying that forged Iranian banknotes had been seized on local markets. United Arab Emirates bankers said Saturday that a UAE central bank circular had warned them to be vigilant because 992 forged 10,000-rial notes had been seized in Kuwait. Kuwait's Al Rai Al Aam newspaper said Interior Ministry officials denied the report. Iran's official rate for the rial is around 70 to the dollar but the uncontrolled market rate in Iran and in rial trading centres, such as Dubai in the UAE, is around 1,350.



An Israeli-owned vehicle stoned and flipped on its side by Palestinian schoolboys in Arab Jerusalem

5 Palestinians break out of Ketziot

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — Five Palestinian prisoners escaped Sunday from Israel's Ketziot tent prison in the southern desert, and two of the fugitives apparently crossed the border into Egypt, the military command said. Also Sunday, unknown assailants kidnapped a 30-year-old Palestinian suspected of collaborating with Israel from his home in a Gaza Strip refugee camp and hacked him to death, Arab reports said. The Ketziot prisoners, all residents of Gaza, managed to

lift a section of the chain-link fence and escaped on foot without being noticed, Israel Radio said. Their absence was revealed only during a count of prisoners, it said. The army said two of the fugitives were captured when soldiers combed the area later Sunday. The tracks of two others led across the Israeli-Egyptian border and the fifth surrendered to United Nations' observers in Egypt's Sinai peninsula and was transferred

to the Egyptian authorities, it said. In Gaza's Bureij refugee camp, unknown assailants kidnapped Salim Abu Mendil, who they accused of collaborating with Israel, Palestinian journalists said. They said Abu Mendil was hacked and stabbed to death and that his body was found at about 10 a.m., three hours after he was kidnapped. The army command said it had no information about the killing.

The death brought to 195 the number of Palestinians slain on suspicion of collaborating with Israel during the 27-month uprising. At least 652 Palestinians have died of Israeli gunfire in the rebellion, and 43 Israelis have also been killed. In three separate stone-throwing clashes in Gaza, Israeli troops on Sunday shot and wounded three Palestinian youths, Arab hospital officials said. The army command said it had no reports of injuries.

CBJ reports new seizure of counterfeit JD 20 bills

AMMAN (J.T.) — For the second time in two months, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) has reported the seizure of counterfeit Jordanian currency found in or coming from the occupied territories and has warned local banks that further amounts of forged banknotes could be on their way here. A limited quantity of forged JD 20 bills was seized recently here and the Jordanian markets could have been infiltrated by other quantities for which extra care should be taken by all banks, a CBJ statement said Sunday. On Feb. 2 the CBJ said it was investigating reports of forged Jordanian currency found in the occupied Gaza Strip and would deal with the matter in cooperation with the security authorities.

The bank said that the discovery came four years after a limited quantity of forged JD 20 bills were brought to the Kingdom by residents in the occupied West Bank. The bank accused the Israeli authorities of whipping up propaganda campaigns against the Jordanian economy to spread fears among Palestinians who deal in Jordanian currency. The CBJ's Sunday statement urged banks and financial institutions to alert their staff, specially those dealing with cash at the counter, to take extra care and scrutinise each JD 20 bill passing across their desk with the help of a special machine which most banks already possess. Should a bank lack such a machine, its staff could use the CBJ facilities in Amman, Irbid and Aqaba, the statement said.

The statement gave hints that would enable ordinary citizens as well as bank employees to detect forged bills. It said that a forged banknote is unusually smooth paper, the King's picture in it is not clear, the head dress appears somewhat distorted, the electronic line does not exist and the brown colour in a forged bill is normally lighter than that in the genuine bill while the green olive branch on the right corner is darker. Last July, CBJ Governor Mohammad Saeed Al Nabulsi accused Israel of trying to undermine the dinar by triggering panic-selling of the Jordanian currency in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The dinar in the West Bank has always been a target for Israeli conspiracies aimed at shaking it, Nabulsi said.

Violence plagues S. Africa

CAPE TOWN (R) — Nationwide political violence claimed at least 15 lives at the weekend, with a baby, a policeman and several women among the victims of the worst clashes in South Africa since 1986. Police said in a routine report two news agencies Sunday that five people were shot, stabbed or burned to death in black townships across South Africa Saturday night. In Saturday's report, police said 10 people had died, including an 18-month-old baby and a man wired to a railway track near Johannesburg and run over by a train. Two people, including an unidentified black woman, were shot to death, a man was burned to death and another two men, one a police officer, were stabbed and hacked by mobs, Sunday's police report said. The latest deaths were in Natal province, where about 2,800 people have died in a three-year-old power struggle between the politically moderate Inkatha tribal movement and the more radical United Democratic Front (UDF). Elsewhere in South Africa, 15 people were injured, 25 were arrested, seven houses were damaged and 10 vehicles were burned in clashes including gun, rock and petrol-bomb attacks on police at home and on patrol.

Britain pressures Iraq over death-row journalist

LONDON (Agencies) — Britain mobilised international pressure on Iraq Sunday to spare the life of Farzad Bazoft, a British-based journalist sentenced to death for spying by an Iraqi revolutionary court. The Foreign Office said Britain's ambassador in Baghdad had delivered an urgent appeal for clemency from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher — said to be "horrified" by the sentence — and was told it would be passed to President Saddam Hussein. The envoys of Ireland, France and Italy lodged a separate clemency plea at the Iraqi Foreign Ministry on behalf of the European Community, and Britain said it was seeking support from the United Nations. "We've put in these appeals and we're trying to mobilise international pressure on Iraq," a Foreign Office spokesman said. "We now have to watch and see what comes of that." Bazoft, 31, an Iranian-born British national, was arrested in September and charged with spying for foreign powers after making an unauthorised trip to a military complex where a huge explosion occurred. He was in Iraq on an assignment for the Observer, a London Sunday newspaper. Daphne Parish, 53, a British nurse who drove Bazoft to the site, was sentenced to 15 years in jail by the same court which Saturday condemned the reporter

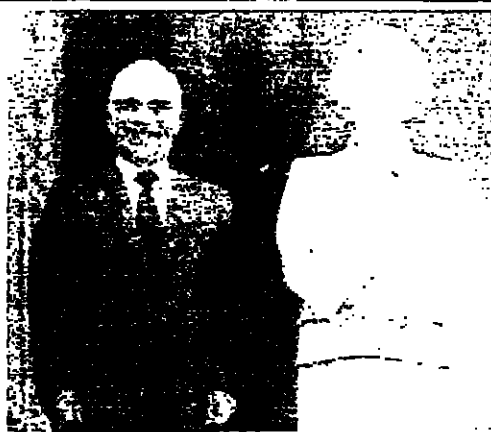
to death by hanging. Britain expressed shock and dismay at the sentences. It was not clear when Bazoft's sentence might be carried out, but Foreign Office Minister William Waldegrave said Saturday that efforts to save him would concentrate "on the immediate next few hours." He warned that relations with Iraq would be severely damaged if the death sentence was carried out. Observer editor Donald Treford said he delivered a letter to the Iraqi embassy on Sunday, calling on ambassador Dr. Azmi Al Salibi to urge President Hussein to commute the sentences. Treford said he had a "heated exchange" with the embassy's second-ranking official who he identified as Zuhir Ibrahim. "He said that Farzad had taken soil samples from the military site and was therefore not acting properly. I argued I had heard nothing to suggest he had acted in any way other than as a journalist." Bazoft appeared on Iraqi Television after his arrest and admitted spying for Israel, but argued at his trial that the "confession" was extracted under duress. Iraqi media have made no mention of the case. Britain's ambassador to Iraq, Harold Walker, said in a radio interview he was pressing for access to Bazoft and Parish, but had been told they were being transferred between jails.

Arab League to return to Cairo

TUNIS (Agencies) — The Arab League decided Sunday to move its headquarters back to Cairo after an absence of more than 10 years prompted by Egypt's separate peace treaty with Israel. The return, agreed in principle by Arab foreign ministers in Tunis, will virtually close the chapter on the isolation which Egypt endured after the late President Anwar Sadat signed the U.S.-brokered Camp David accords in 1978 and a treaty the next year. Cairo, the Arab World's largest city and leading cultural and intellectual centre, will once again be its diplomatic capital. Egyptian Foreign Minister Esmat Abdul Meguid told his country's news agency, MENA, that "there has been a decision today to return the Arab League general secretariat from its temporary base in Tunis to its permanent headquarters in Cairo." Arab diplomats said that Tunis would remain an alternate centre for the organisation, rather as Geneva stands to New York in the United Nations, and would be home to specialised Arab League agencies. The principle of a return to Cairo had been accepted in advance by Tunis. But last minute bargaining delayed the first session of the foreign ministers' meeting by several hours on Saturday. Egypt insisted on returning the league offices to Cairo in accordance with the Arab League Charter, which stipulated that the Egyptian capital should be the seat of the organisation. The government has meanwhile spruced up the headquarters building in downtown Cairo, overlooking the Nile River, apparently anticipating the league's return. Delegates said Egypt indicated it wanted to discuss the move, but Tunisia, backed by Algeria and the Palestine Liberation Organisation among others, argued the decision could only be taken by an Arab summit. MENA said that "the agreement provides for returning the league's secretariat and employees to Cairo and employing

King, Thatcher review Mideast

LONDON (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher Sunday held talks on a number of issues of interest to both countries and reviewed the latest developments on the international arena, particularly in Europe and their implications on the Middle East. The talks also dealt with the role that Europe can play in pushing the peace process forward. King Hussein was also scheduled to meet with British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd. The King arrived here from Paris Wednesday after similar talks with French President Francois Mitterrand.



His Majesty King Hussein with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher Sunday (Petra wirephoto)

Israeli coalition teeters as Shamir stalls cabinet vote

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel's inner cabinet on Sunday failed to reach agreement on U.S. peace proposals, and Vice-Premier Shimon Peres said he would seek a free hand from his Labour Party to break up the government if necessary. Peres, who has vowed to end the coalition with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir unless there was progress in peace efforts, said on Israel Radio he viewed the lack of a decision as a rejection. "The party will decide... the cabinet is in total disagreement," Peres told reporters. Peres left the nearly three-hour cabinet session after Shamir refused his demand for a vote and said he believed a more days of debate would be needed. After conferring with Labour cabinet ministers, Peres announced he would take the issue to the party's 2,000-member central committee. "The peace process came to an end and because of this we recommend that the central committee will empower our parliament group to take the necessary steps which are needed to draw conclusions from the situation," Peres told reporters. The wording indicated Peres wanted a free hand to call on the 39 Labour members of parliament to vote in favour of a no-confidence motion that would bring down the government. But it was sufficiently vague to leave the door open for a last-minute compromise. Peres had insisted that Likud approve a U.S.-sponsored Cairo dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis. Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a Labour minister who has saved the coalition several times in the past, avoided reporters when left the meeting at Shamir's office. The official who demanded

Rabin, who helped draft Israel's original proposal for elections in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, had warned that Israel must enter talks with Palestinians but had also proposed a compromise to preserve the government. "A government that blocks the chance for peace will be sorry and there is no place for its continued existence," Rabin told Israel Radio before the 12-member inner-cabinet met. Rabin proposed leaving to parliament the divisive issue of whether to let the 150,000 Arab Jerusalem Palestinians take part in the voting. A decision would wait until the subject came up in Cairo. Labour ministers said Shamir refused to hold a vote on the compromise proposed by Rabin. Transport Minister Moshe Katsav of Likud said Peres walked out when Shamir called for debate over their differences to continue. "We must make an effort — another day or two, another week or two — to find a formula that will enable the two parties to act together," Katsav told reporters. Rabin said earlier both parties would agree to leave the Cairo talks if the Palestinians said they represented the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Likud fears that Washington, which talks with the PLO, and Labour would let Arab Jerusalem Palestinians vote in the elections and allow the PLO to brief Palestinian negotiators. A senior official said Shamir believed more debate was needed because U.S. President Bush and other officials had created uncertainty by raising questions about Jerusalem's status and the role of the PLO in the negotiating process. The official who demanded

anonymity said, "there is a sense that there has been a deviation from the original peace initiative" in which the PLO was dealt out and Israel's claim to Arab Jerusalem was not an issue. The official, who is close to Shamir, said the prime minister had not given up on the possibility of a compromise. Arafat: Israel wriggling out In Tunis, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said Sunday the Israeli government was trying to wriggle out of the peace process and urged greater efforts to halt the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. Arafat, addressing nine ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement's Committee on Palestine, denounced "the foot-dragging and open manoeuvring undertaken by Israeli leaders to escape all peace initiatives." He urged the ministers to join Arab countries in launching an offensive at the United Nations to stop the mass immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. Prominent Palestinians in the occupied West Bank also expressed exasperation at Israeli leaders who, for the second week in a row, failed to come to a decision on whether to start a peace dialogue. Faisal Al Hussein, a prominent Palestinian who has been mentioned as a possible negotiator, said: "When they decide, yes or no, we would have something to talk about. But a government that cannot decide anything is just blocking the way." President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker have said in the past 10 days that Israel's policy of settling Jews in the occupied lands, including Arab Jerusalem, was an impediment to peace.

Beirut duels, blast kill 1, wound 20

BEIRUT (R) — Political violence maimed and killed on both sides of Beirut's green line Sunday when a car bomb exploded in the west and machinegun duels broke out in the east. Security sources said about 20 people were wounded when a booby-trapped Mercedes exploded metres from a Syrian military base in the densely-populated Qasas residential area in west Beirut. "The car blew up exactly at a Syrian checkpoint facing the position. The blast threw parts of the car inside the Syrian base," said Youssef Darwish, who saw the explosion. Maqassed Hospital said it had received 15 wounded, some with serious injuries. It was not known if Syrian soldiers were hurt. Ambulances and fire trucks rushed to evacuate the wounded after the explosion gutted several cars, sparked fires and shattered glass in nearby buildings. Some 40,000 Syrian troops are deployed over two-thirds of Lebanon including west Beirut. Their presence is fiercely opposed by General Michel Aoun, whose troops fought fellow-Christians in the Lebanese Forces (LF) militia with

machineguns and rocket-propelled grenades Sunday. At least one civilian was killed before fighting eased to sniper fire in the afternoon. Fighting with mortars and heavy machineguns killed seven people and wounded seven others in the past two days. More than 800 people have been killed and 2,650 wounded in fighting that started on Jan. 31 for the control of Lebanon's Christian enclave. Christian mediators, backed by France and the Vatican, achieved a shaky ceasefire March 2 but failed to hammer out a political settlement despite repeated meetings with Aoun and LF leader Samir Geagea. Aoun, commander of some 15,000 troops, and Geagea, chief of the 10,000-man militia, have made conciliatory statements but Christian political sources said neither was willing to make concessions. The car bomb was the second this year in Lebanon. A blast on Jan. 27 inflicted no casualties but caused heavy material damage. In November last year a massive car bomb killed President Rene Muawad 17 days after he was elected.

Moscow opens key party talks

MOSCOW (Agencies) — The Communist Party Central Committee met Sunday to set the agenda for a special parliamentary session to revoke the party's monopoly on power and elect a vastly more powerful president. The party's policy-making body convened on the fifth anniversary of its selection of Mikhail Gorbachev as Soviet leader, and listened to Gorbachev give a one-hour report on actions that could give the Soviet Union a multiparty system with himself holding the most important powers, the official news agency TASS reported. The 2,250-member Congress of People's Deputies parliament is expected to approve those changes in a session opening Monday. In an editorial, the Communist Party newspaper Pravda told readers that in five years Gorbachev had managed to change their country for good. "The past five years have changed our country beyond recognition, and it will never again be what it was," Pravda said. "Today's Soviet society differs much more from 1985's society than 1985's society

(Continued on page 3)

Displaced Lebanese Christians begin returning to their villages

MAGHDOSHEH, Lebanon (R) — "I knelt and kissed the floor three times when I returned to my house," said Christian Ousta Kizhaya, tears streaming down his cheeks.

The 56-year-old Maghdousheh villager is one of hundreds who fled in 1986 to escape fighting in mainly Muslim-controlled areas only to be driven home again by inter-Christian battles in east Beirut.

The return of Christian refugees to this scenic hilltop village of vineyards and orange groves overlooking the Mediterranean 40 kilometres south of Beirut is not an isolated example.

Christians are streaming back to abandoned homes outside the Christian enclave despite the ceasefire between General Michel Aoun's army and Shamir Geagea's rival Lebanese Forces militia.

The villagers of Maghdousheh abandoned their homes and fields four years ago when fighting erupted between Amal and Palestinian fighters in the nearby Ain Al Hilweh refugee camp. Most sought sanctuary in Christian east Beirut.

But during the recent five-week wave of killings in east Beirut, their abandoned villages presented a safer haven despite bitter memories of the Amal-Palestinian terror.

Kizhaya said he was hit by four bullets in the chest in the Palestinian-Amal fighting and was evacuated by Lebanese army

helicopter to east Beirut for treatment. He still wanted to go home.

"I thanked the Virgin Mary and her son for bringing me back to my village," Kizhaya said. "I never expected to return."

Father Sleiman Wehbeh said "people preferred to flee from the fighting in east Beirut in February even though the situation in Maghdousheh was not known to them."

"When I arrived in this village in 1988 just 35 old men and women were living in it," he said.

Over the last two years some 250 families trickled back. But during the latest east Beirut fighting that number had soared to 600 families.

Draft agreements to end the 15-year-old Lebanese civil war repeatedly called for the return to their original homes of one million displaced persons, about a

third of Lebanon's total population.

The call had been largely ignored until now.

Wehbeh said charity organisations offer 30,000 Lebanese pounds (\$550) to very family who returns to their villages to encourage them to stay. Wehbeh added.

"We do not pay the money until we make sure that the family will stay in its house and will take care of its land," he said.

Wehbeh said life in the village was gradually returning to normal. Sunday masses attracted some 900 people each week, he said.

He expressed the hope that the day would come when all villagers would return to their villages in every part of Lebanon.

Maghdousheh resident Azar Hanna Lahoud, 68, said: "War drove us out of our home town and war has brought us back."

Gunmen wounded, hostages freed in Istanbul

ISTANBUL (R) — Police stormed an Istanbul apartment Sunday and rescued the last of three hostages in a 17-hour manhunt and siege that followed a Saturday night attack on police by leftist extremists.

A gunman who had fled to the apartment with three captives was seriously wounded. His companions, a man and a woman, were captured after the original attack in which a policeman was killed and two were wounded.

Turkish newspapers spoke to the gunman by telephone during the siege and said he belonged to the little-known Turkish Revolutionary Communist Party. Police would not confirm that but referred to him as a "terrorist."

An upsurge of street killings of public figures and attacks on police has revived fears over political violence by left and right which was the bane of Turkish life in the late 1970s, bringing on an army coup and three years of military rule.

Leaders of Turkey's three major parties in parliament will meet Monday to discuss terrorism.

The overnight drama began with the ambush of a police patrol car in the working class area of Zeytinburnu about 10 kilometres from the central business sector.

One of the three attackers escaped on foot and reached the nearby residential district of Atakoy, where he took three men hostage and holed up in an unoccupied 11th floor apartment.

Two of the hostages escaped and the third fled when police threw gas bombs and broke into the flat. A gun battle followed inside the apartment.

"The terrorist is seriously injured and the three hostages managed to escape shortly before he was captured in a police operation on the apartment this morning," Istanbul police chief Hamdi Ardali told reporters.

The gunman had two automatic weapons, two pistols, a hand grenade and ammunition, Ardali said. He was taken to emergency surgery, the semi-official Anatolian News Agency reported.

The head of Turkey's Law Association, Maammer Aksoy, newspaper columnist Cetin Emec and his driver, and two policemen have been victims of four separate street shootings in the last two months.

The military cracked down on political extremists of both right and left after more than 5,000 people were killed since the late 1970s. Hundreds of thousands of people were arrested to stand trial by military courts.

Kuwait ready to form elected assembly under new regulations

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's crown prince said the government might introduce an elected assembly but only under regulations that prevent practices that led to the dissolution of the previous parliament.

Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah was quoted by Al Watan newspaper Sunday as saying government permission would be granted "if all (political groups), without exception, say 'yes' we want an assembly and popular participation".

But the assembly would be convened "according to a (new) basis and regulations," he told Al Watan. He gave no details.

The Emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, cited a foreign conspiracy to destroy the state when he dissolved the parliament at the height of the Iran-Iraq war in 1986.

Sheikh Saad, who is prime minister, criticised some of the 32 former deputies demanding the return of parliament for distributing tapes of what he called pro-

vocative speeches. "What the people want is the non-repetition of the experiences of 1976 and 1986 (when parliaments were dissolved) and that we do not arrive at a third crisis," Sheikh Saad was quoted as saying.

He has been meeting since late January with scores of former deputies, tribal heads and prominent citizens after activists staged seven stormy rallies in December and January to back their demands for its reinstatement.

Many Kuwaitis, including former deputies demanding a new parliament, say public debates have in the past sowed divisions among the country's different tribes, ethnic groups and religious factions.

Sheikh Saad last week met with pro-democracy former deputies to hear their demands and later held separate talks with five of them to discuss recorded speeches circulating among Kuwaitis.

"Speeches and cassettes are foreign to the Kuwaiti society, for we are a united family. Those speeches contain a lot of provocation...why?" He asked in the interview.

"I meet and open my heart to you and in the evening I hear this talk (on tape). This is not allowed," he added.

The Emir in January demanded an end to rallies and offered dialogue with pro-democracy deputies and other political groups to discuss public participation in government.

Sheikh Saad said he had not yet offered a formula or proposals. "They are meetings to listen to the views of the citizens...up till now we have not entered into details," he added.

Some activists fear the government might offer a shura (consultative) council which would have no effective powers.

But Sheikh Saad last week said he was in favour of an assembly "that not only acts as a watchdog, but to which (the government) will be accountable as well."

Soviet Muslims are free, envoy says

NICOSIA (R) — A Soviet envoy on a visit to Saudi Arabia said in a television interview that Muslims in the Soviet Union have political, religious and economic freedom.

Vladimir Polyakov, director of the Middle East and North Africa Department at the Soviet Foreign Ministry, told Saudi television Saturday.

"Muslims in the Soviet Union now have all their rights and freedom to practise their religion and the right to study Islam. They also have their political, economic and social rights like all other peoples in the Soviet Union."

Extracts of the interview carried by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) were received in Cyprus Sunday.

Polyakov arrived in Saudi Arabia last week and held talks with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal on Arab fears of a mass influx of Soviet Jews to Israel.

He briefed Prince Saud on the Soviet position on the Palestinian issue, Soviet Jewish settlement in Israeli-occupied territories, the Iran-Iraq war and Afghanistan, SPA said.

Polyakov is the first senior Soviet official to visit Saudi Arabia since Yuli Voronov, deputy foreign minister and the Kremlin's top envoy on Afghanistan, met King Fahd last year.

Relations between the Soviet Union and the Saudi kingdom have been frozen since 1939. Polyakov said that "in recent

developments in the Soviet Union, freedom to practise Islam and study the Koran in Muslim Soviet republics has been spreading and the Muslim Soviet have their religious leadership now."

He said Muslims in the Soviet Union, estimated at 50 million in the last census, have their legal number of representatives in the Supreme Soviet council and have deputies in all the councils of the Muslim republics.

"We see a positive role for Soviet Muslims in the national and political arena of the Soviet Union because Soviet Muslims, like all Muslims in the world, solve problems with a balanced and peaceful approach," Polyakov added.

2 Israelis charged in killing prisoner

TEL AVIV (AP) — The Jerusalem district court has indicted two agents of Israel's Shin Bet security service in the beating death of a Palestinian prisoner in a Gaza Strip jail, a Justice Ministry announcement said Sunday.

The names of the two defendants and details of the case were banned from publication until an initial closed-door hearing was held, the announcement said, adding the defendants' lawyers agreed to what could be published about the case.

It is unusual for charges to be brought against Shin Bet agents, and the closed-door treatment of the case was in keeping with traditional secrecy about the agency's internal security. The name of the agency's chief, for

example, is an official secret.

The charge of manslaughter was brought in the death of Khaled Kamel Al Sheikh Ali, 27, who died last Dec. 19 after being arrested on suspicion of belonging to the Muslim fundamentalist Jihad Islami organisation and of illegal possession of weapons.

After his death, Israeli newspapers quoted authorities as attributing his death to a heart attack, but an independent autopsy performed at the request of his family last Dec. 24 found he died of internal bleeding.

The Justice Ministry announcement said the two defendants questioned the prisoner and "during the interrogation... the accused dealt blows to Sheikh Ali, and as a result Sheikh Ali suffered internal bleeding that led

to his death."

The indictment was handed down last Thursday but was not made public.

According to a published report by an Israeli human rights group, there are nine other cases in which Palestinians died in custody since the start of the Palestinian uprising. Those cases involve either prison or Shin Bet personnel.

The Israeli Centre for Human Rights in the occupied territories did not list prosecutions in any of the cases.

Also during the uprising, four Israeli soldiers were tried in the beating death of a Palestinian in the Gaza Strip in August 1988. They were acquitted of manslaughter last May but convicted of brutality.

Moroccan prisoners find solace in prayer

By Philip Shehadi
Reuters

BOUGARFA DETENTION CENTRE, Algeria — Mouloud Alabouch starts each day with prayer. Cast away in this forsaken desert camp miles from anywhere, he finds solace kneeling in worship as dawn colours the immense Saharan sky.

"We live from day to day, hoping God will deliver us," said the Moroccan soldier captured 10 years ago by independence-seeking Polisario guerrillas in a long simmering war much of the world ignores.

Alabouch, 50, is one of 200 Moroccan prisoners the Polisario tried to free last June as a peace gesture in their 15-year struggle for independence of the Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony occupied by Morocco.

But eight months later Alabouch remains as far as ever from his home in the southern Moroccan city of Taza, beginning yet another day in this dusty camp of domed mud huts near Algeria's southwestern border.

"Last June they told us we were going home. I was so happy. But nothing has happened since then."

Keen to deny the Polisario the propaganda victory and recognition they sought, King Hassan refused Red Cross mediation that would have allowed Alabouch and his colleagues to return home.

Both sides appear to be using the prisoners as political pawns in an intractable conflict that rarely makes world headlines but refuses to die.

Morocco objects that freedom for the 200 is not part of the U.N. peace plan now being pushed in the region by a special envoy of

Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

The Polisario says the king has turned his back on his own citizens. But none of the dozen prisoners interviewed by foreign journalists during a visit would blame the king or express any political views.

"We do not know if the king has refused us or not," said Kador Mimoun, from the central Moroccan city of Khenifra. "We don't know why we can't go home."

In apparently good health but visibly dejected, the prisoners are the oldest and weakest or more than 2,000 the Algerian-backed Polisario say they hold. They spoke reluctantly and with vacant expressions.

Civilian Almo Fanan Rahal, 74, was captured 13 years ago while driving a truck through the Western Sahara from his native

Marrakesh. With no television and only one letter from his wife and seven children since then, he has passed the time memorising the entire Koran.

The prisoners send letters to their families through foreign visitors but rarely receive any answers. Military authorities in Morocco give virtually no information to anxious families about the prisoners.

Since their aborted liberation, the 200 prisoners have done civilian clothes and are free to move about their camp.

But food is still a thin fare of bread, rice and lentils. The forbidding empty desert around, with its scaring sun and frigid nights, leaves little chance of escape.

"They say we are free," said one chief corporal from Taza. "But where are we to go?"

MIDDLE EAST NEWS BRIEFS

Rebel Kurds kill 2 women in Turkey

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (R) — Separatist Kurdish rebels have killed two women and wounded a child in an attack on a southeastern Turkish hamlet, security sources said Sunday. They said 10 rebels of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) attacked the remote hamlet of Mantara in the province of Mardin, some 50 kilometres north of the Iraqi border, on Saturday night. More than 2,000 people have been killed since mid-1984 when the PKK, which claims the area is part of an ancient Kurdish homeland, launched a violent independence campaign in southeast Turkey.

W. Bank carrots allowed in

AMMAN (Petra) — Carrots are allowed to enter the Kingdom from the occupied Arab territories as of March 15, according to a decision by Minister of Agriculture Sulaiman Arabiyat. The decision limited the quantity to two tonnes per year.

Sudan to free political prisoners

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's military junta has released 21 trade union officials from detention and said all political prisoners except those facing corruption charges would be freed soon. The official Sudanese News Agency quoted information minister Ali Shomou as saying political prisoners still in detention would be released within the next two days. He did not say how many they were.

Mystery blast rocks Algerian city

ALGIERS (R) — A huge explosion rocked the area around Oran in western Algeria Saturday night, the Algerian news agency (APS) said Sunday. It said the explosion was heard up to 70 kilometres away but the cause was not immediately known. The agency did not report any damage or casualties. Oran has a tanker terminal and a major gas liquefaction plant is situated at Arzew, 30 kilometres to the east.

39 drug smugglers hanged in Iran

NICOSIA (AP) — Thirty nine drug smugglers convicted by Islamic courts were hanged Sunday in 12 Iranian cities, Tehran Radio reported. The broadcast, monitored in Nicosia, said the 39 were charged with smuggling or selling a total of 1,574 kilograms of opium and 63 kilograms of heroin. Iranian law mandates the death sentence for possession of even small quantities of drugs with intent to sell.

Kuwait bans Iglesias perfume

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait has banned a perfume named for Julio Iglesias because of the Spanish singer's "Zionist inclinations", the official Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported. It gave no explanation of the accusation against Iglesias, whose music is also banned in Kuwait.

Abbie Nathan may be jailed again

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli peace activist Abie Nathan could be put back in jail because of his meeting with PLO leader Yasser Arafat in Tunis last week, Israeli legal experts said Sunday. Nathan, who was freed on Feb. 9 after serving 122 days for violating a law against meeting PLO officials, described his discussion with Arafat in an interview Sunday on Israel Radio. The 63-year-old Nathan, speaking from Tunis where the PLO has its headquarters, said Arafat asked during the meeting Friday how Nathan felt about going back to jail. "I said that it is worth my whole life to see today that you (Arafat) as a leader are speaking about peace," Nathan told Israel Radio. Nathan's interview came shortly before Israel's cabinet failed to decide on a proposal for opening peace talks with Palestinians, partly because Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's Likud Bloc rejects any step to allow even an indirect PLO role in peace talks. Nathan has repeatedly called on Israel to hold peace talks with the PLO. He also has said he will fight against 1986 law outlawing meetings with PLO officials.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME ONE

15:30 Koran
15:40 Programme review
15:45 Children programmes
15:50 News summary in Arabic
15:55 World News
16:00 Local programme
16:05 Programme review
16:10 News in Arabic
16:15 Arabic series
16:20 Programme review
16:25 Local programmes
16:30 News summary in Arabic

PROGRAMME TWO

16:30 Arsen Lupin
16:40 News in French
16:45 Weekly Sport magazine
16:50 News in Hebrew
16:55 Varieties
17:00 "A Tale of Two Cities"
17:05 Houston
17:10 News in English
17:15 Midnight Caller

PRAYER TIMES

06:37 Fair
06:57 Sunrise (Dala)
11:25 Dhuhur
15:08 'Asr
17:44 Maghreb
19:51 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swiffield
Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel.
632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624990

Church of the Annunciation Tel.
637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Ternate Church Tel. 623466

Church of the Annunciation Tel.
623541

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.
717331

Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel.
683326

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel.
811295

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-
Day Saints Tel. 815817, 624932

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of
Meteorology.
A cold front will affect the country.
Therefore it will be cold, cloudy and
rainy at times. Winds will be south-
westerly fresh with strong gusts at

times. In Aqaba, it will be partly
cloudy with expected thunder showers
and winds will be southerly fresh and
sea rough.

Amman 5 / 10
Aqaba 10 / 18
Dahsh 4 / 14
Jordan Valley 8 / 16

Yesterday's high temperatures: Am-
man 12, Aqaba 22. Humidity readings:
Amman 84 per cent, Aqaba 33 per
cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE

NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Yusef Al Hourani 625478
Dr. Yahya Abdul Rahim 730774
Dr. Hamdi Al Zuraifi 783708
Dr. Mohammad Abu Maftouz 793344
Firas pharmacy 661912
Perdoux pharmacy 773336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Saham pharmacy 636730
Yaseen pharmacy 644945
Shamoun pharmacy 637660

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Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Saham pharmacy 636730
Yaseen pharmacy 644945
Shamoun pharmacy 637660

Jordan Electricity Authority ... 815615

Electric Power 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Aila Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 818313/2
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mallat, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsani 664171/4
Shamsani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 848845
Al-Mustashir Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abadi 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abadi 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajira 771101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Maris 891611/15
Queen Aila Hospital 602240/59
Azazi Hospital 674135

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983322
Zarqa National Hospital (09)991071
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

REHMA:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272735
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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ment at the Queen Alia International
Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it
should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

09:00 Damascus (RJ)
09:30 Safana (RJ)
09:45 Aqaba (RJ)
09:50 Baghdad (RJ)
09:55 Cairo (RJ)
09:55 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:00 Dhahran, Kuwait (RJ)
10:15 Larana (RJ)
10:45 Cairo (RJ)
17:15 Istanbul (RJ)
18:10 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
18:30 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Regent congratulates Chilean leader

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday sent a cable to the newly-elected Chilean president, Patricio Aylwin, congratulating him, in his own name and on behalf of Jordan's people and government. Prince Hassan voiced hope that relations between Chile and Jordan would be further improved. The Crown Prince wished Aylwin continued good health and happiness and the Chilean people further progress and prosperity.

Parliament session may be extended

AMMAN (J.T.) — The current session of the Lower House of Parliament ends March 26 according to the Constitution, but His Majesty King Hussein could call for an extraordinary session to be held after the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan or in early May, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Abdul Baqi Gammou said. Gammou said Sunday the length of the extraordinary session can be determined only by royal decree. Normally the new session opens again on November 1 with a royal decree based on the 82nd Article of the Constitution. Gammou said Parliament had many draft laws to debate some of which require urgent discussion.

Greek Orthodox thank King

AMMAN (Petra) — Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theodoros I of Jerusalem and Palestine voiced gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty King Hussein for the good care his government offers to the Greek Orthodox community in Jordan and for the facilities it has provided to the community to enable it to construct a Greek Orthodox cathedral in Abdoun. Patriarch Theodoros, who was speaking at a ceremony held Sunday to mark the official opening of the new cathedral, said that King Hussein directs special attention to all Jordanian citizens, irrespective of their nationality or religion.

House committees meet

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament Administrative Committee met Sunday under the chairmanship of Deputy Jamal Al Khreishah and discussed several suggestions and complaints. The committee decided to recommend a review of the issue of unclassified employees. The Legal Committee also held a meeting Sunday under the chairmanship of Deputy Hussein Mujalli and discussed the higher court of justice law. The Lower House of Parliament is due to meet next Saturday to discuss the income tax law after the Financial Committee studied it, according to the House's acting Speaker Jamal Al Sarayreh. He also said that the House would convene Tuesday, March 20 to discuss corruption and debt issues.

274 car accidents in 1 week

AMMAN (Petra) — Three persons were killed and 149 injured in 274 car accidents that occurred in the Kingdom from Feb. 24 till March 3, 1990. The traffic department sources said that the period witnessed an increase of 18 accidents over the week before. The sources said that the number of injured increased by 37 and those killed by only one. Of the total number of accidents 125 occurred in Amman, 37 in Zarqa, 21 in Balqa, 47 in Irbid, 7 in Karak, 3 in Maan, 11 in Aqaba, 7 in the badia region, 10 in Al Mafraq, 4 in Tafleeh and two in Madaba.

Jordan to attend OIC cooperation talks

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will participate in preparatory meetings of the member states of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Istanbul March 24. The ministers concerned with technical cooperation will discuss during their three-day meetings ways to bolster and promote cooperation among Islamic countries in the fields of technical research and implementing development projects, particularly those concerning irrigation and housing. The Ministry of Planning Secretary-General will represent Jordan at these meetings.

QAF marks women's day

AMMAN (J.T.) — Queen Alia Social Welfare Fund (QAF) took part in the Kingdom's ongoing celebrations of the women's international day. Director of QAF's Women Affairs Department Laila Qaqish said the fund had prepared a comprehensive programme to mark the occasion. "The programme aims to demonstrate what the Jordanian woman achieved, her role in serving her country and her contribution to the comprehensive development process," Qaqish said. QAF's celebrations included 23 social services centres in Amman, Mafraq, Tafleeh, Maan governorates and Madaba.

Arabyat heads for FAO conference

AMMAN (Petra) — Agriculture Minister Sulaiman Arabiyat Sunday left for Tunis to take part in the 20th regional conference of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), which starts Monday. The five-day conference will discuss a number of working papers on agricultural issues of interest to the countries of the Near East.

Puppet production underway

AMMAN (J.T.) — Rehearsals are underway for the puppet production "Sandouq Jaddati: Hikayat" (Tales from My Grandmother's Chest), which will be shown to the public in 14 performances, spread over nine days, starting March 17. The play, which will be presented by the Noor Al Hussein Foundation in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, is written, designed, produced and performed by Wafa Qusous. She will be assisted in manipulating the puppets by Munir Qaddoumi, in cooperation with Mohammad Al Amr. In addition to the public performances, to be held at the Royal Cultural Centre's Studio Theatre, there will be 18 morning performances in schools throughout the Greater Amman area. A discussion of all aspects of the production, in which the audience will participate, will follow each performance.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- Exhibition of plastic artists Arij Al Hamad and Ibrahim Al Nahabneh at the Housing Bank Complex.
- Art exhibition by seven Iraqi artists at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation (10 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
- Exhibition of ceramics by Iraqi artist Siham Al Saoudi at hotel Jordan Inter-Continental.
- Exhibition of paintings by Jordanian artist Mohammad Issa at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- Plastic art exhibition by Mohammed Al Abedi at the Yarmouk University.
- Art exhibition displaying paintings on glass and silk by Wafaa Tarawneh and Awni Al Khashib at the Professional Associations Complex.

SEMINAR

- Seminar entitled "Woman and Literature" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation — 6:00 p.m.

FILM

- French film entitled "Le Ciel Est a Vous" at the French Cultural Centre — 8:00 p.m.

Arabyat outlines marketing strategy, explains obstacles

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan last year exported agricultural crops worth JD 100 million as a result of a new government policy which encourages investment and exports, Minister of Agriculture Sulaiman Arabiyat said Sunday. But, he said, that the devalued Jordanian dinar has made it difficult to acquire modern equipment which now is sold at a higher price from the Jordanian viewpoint.

The minister, addressing the opening of a two-day symposium designed to help officials and specialists work out a national agricultural marketing strategy, said that the government was trying to open new markets for Jordanian products in Arab and foreign countries and help farmers organise production.

"The government is also seeking to establish a unified national system for marketing crops here

and abroad to ensure a larger margin of profit for local farmers," the minister said.

"Jordan is facing a difficult stage in its development and therefore needs sound planning and sacrifices in order to overcome present hardships," Arabiyat said.

The minister also said that Jordan's economy can by no means be independent from those of the neighbouring Arab countries. The decline in oil prices in the Gulf countries has led to a drop in Jordan's revenues in the form of money transfers by expatriates and Arab financial aid, the minister explained.

He added that the on-going economic restructuring programme agreed on with the International Monetary Fund was bound to help Jordan stimulate the economy and "resume the road to progress."

Dr. Fahd Al Azab, director-general of the Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO) which is organising the two-day meeting together with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), said that modern methods in farming applied in Jordan had helped the country to boost agricultural production, eliminate many pests and find new market abroad.

But, he said, changes in farming methods and production in the neighbouring states and new agricultural policies adopted there have adversely affected the Kingdom's exports. He said that such policies had resulted in the emergence of strong competitors to Jordanian produce abroad.

"For this reason it has become imperative to work out new strategies for marketing the Kingdom's produce abroad," he said. USAID Director Lewis Reed



Sulaiman Arabiyat

said that the agency was providing assistance to Jordan in agricultural research projects. Jordan is at present facing difficulties in marketing products, producing better crops and also from unemployment and lack of sufficient foreign currency, he said.

Agricultural experts and economists are participating in the symposium, which will review four major studies on marketing of agricultural produce.

TCC to consider billing complaints

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) said Sunday that it welcomes complaints from the public about inaccurate telephone bills it receive and that it will promptly investigate the matter and inform the plaintiffs of the result in writing.

TCC Director Mohammad Shahed Ismail was replying in Al Ra'i Arabic daily to a local columnist who said that subscribers were forced to pay for unsuccessful telephone calls. Columnist Fakhri Kassar said last Thursday that he received numerous complaints about bills charging for unsuccessful telephone calls or extra local telephone calls and urged the TCC to clear up the matter.

Ismail said in his reply that his department had received four complaints about unsuccessful telephone calls to Cairo and 300 similar calls to Damascus for

which subscribers were billed. He said that investigations later showed technical failures in the exchange systems installed in the Syrian capital. The concerned Syrian authorities were alerted and they promptly made repairs. Ismail said that all unwarranted charges had been cancelled.

He said, however, that calls where a recorded message replies or calls connected to a facsimile or linked to a branch telephone were all recorded and the subscriber had to pay. He said that in certain cases telephone operators fail to immediately link the caller with the other end but he might open the line of connection. The caller might get impatient and hang up. In such case, Ismail said, the caller has to pay the charges. "The best solution is for the caller to wait for the operator to link him with the other end instead of trying to call again and again," he said.

Father claims wandering son after week-long police effort

By Nur Sati
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The mystery of Khaled Gibril Msalam, a 13-year-old boy who was found by police in the street last week, ended Sunday when his father turned up to claim him but the saga of the apparently mentally disabled boy is far from being over.

According to Ismael Abdul Kader, director of the Special Education Department at the Ministry of Social Development, Khaled was unable to answer any question and could not recognise his own name. He only spoke few words. "We discovered he was mentally retarded," Abdul Kader

said. Unable to identify the boy and return him to his family, police decided to place Khaled in a special education home in Al Ruseifa until his family would claim the boy, but no place was found in the home. Instead, Khaled was kept at the police department while announcements went out through the media.

"We could not conduct any studies about the boy as we have no clue of his family and background," Abdul Kader, told the Jordan Times.

It was not until a week later that Gibril Msalam, the boy's father, contacted the ministry to take Khaled back home.

Abdul Kader plans to meet the father soon to find out why Khaled ran away and to conduct a social study case to find out what can be done for Khaled and his family. Khaled has six elder brothers.

"We have in mind to find Khaled a place in a school for mentally retarded children in Zarqa, but until now nothing is definite," says Abdul Kader.

According to Mohammad Falah, director of the Social Defence Department, who will be studying Khaled's case, "the father said that Khaled runs away from home about once a year, so we will be studying the psychology of the family to find out the causes."

Lorry operators air grievances

AMMAN (J.T.) — Lorry operators in Jordan have sent a memorandum to Minister of Transport Ibrahim Ayoub voicing their grievances and listing a set of demands to help facilitate their work and transport of goods, especially those arriving at Aqaba port.

The memorandum said that while operational costs and prices of spare parts and tyres had increased by nearly 300 per cent, charges on transporting a tonne of goods from Aqaba to Amman remained the same since 1978.

The memorandum said truck drivers were facing increasing difficulties in loading operations at Aqaba and dealing with clearance companies.

The memorandum said that Jordan owns JD 300 million worth of trucks which play a major role in the national economy and therefore they should be allowed to operate more freely and treated more fairly.

The memorandum demanded that charges on transporting goods within Jordan and between Jordan and other countries be increased in view of the soaring prices of various spare parts and the cost of living. They demanded that Jordanian trucks be given priority in transporting goods arriving at Aqaba or vice versa.

The lorry operators urged that a study be conducted with the Union of Truckers to determine the fairness of a JD 4 extra charge taken from the drivers for every trip they make from Aqaba to Iraq. The charge is being levied as a guarantee for the loss of any of the goods loaded on the trucks. According to the memorandum, the amount is not reimbursed to the truckers.

Bataineh said the centre, which was opened in April 1988, has helped a total of 254 women to bear children and 17 more were expected to give birth in the coming few weeks.

He admitted that 15 of the women in the test-tube baby

programme have had miscarriages.

Bataineh, who also heads a team of gynaecologists supervising the deliveries and the implementation of the programme, said that the door was open for all citizens to benefit from the centre's services for sterile men and women. He said the maximum fee for each case will be JD 300 from now on, down from JD 450 in the past for first attempt, JD 200 for a second attempt and JD 150 for a third attempt.

He said that each test-tube baby case costs \$20,000 if conducted abroad.

Construction, statistics training course opens

AMMAN (Petra) — A two-week training course on construction and building statistics, organised by the Arab Institute for Statistical Training and Research in cooperation with the General Statistics Department, started here Sunday.

Addressing the opening session, the institute's Director-General, Abdul Rahman Al Jabouri, stressed the important role played by the construction sector in national development.

He said that the construction sector provides the infrastructure for the economic and social sectors, including roads, bridges, ports, railroads, airports and dams. "All these elements constitute an integral part of the capital and plays a major role in increasing the national income, boosting production and improving living standards," he said.

Construction statistics are important in predicting the state of the economy, he added.

Also addressing the session Director-General of the General Statistics Department Abdul Hadi Alaween stressed that construction statistics were interrelated and complex. He said that even advanced states face problems in its quest to provide accurate, up-to-date and quick statistical information on construction and building.

Alaween stressed the importance of training, saying that it provides participants with skills and means to improve their performance.

Cement mines to go on full production capacity

AMMAN (J.T.) — All production lines at the Rashadieh cement mines in southern Jordan and at Fuhes, west of Amman, will be fully operational next month so as to honour Jordan's commitments to contracts to supply cement to other countries, according to a statement issued Sunday by the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCFC).

The company has contracts under which it is supposed to produce at least three million tonnes annually to honour pledges made to countries in Europe, the United States, Canada and South East Asia. Going on full-gear production, the statement said, is designed to cope with the demand for higher output to fulfill these contracts, the statement added. The company's mines, had been producing cement at an annual rate of 1.5 million tonnes, most of which were exported to Arab and Asian countries.

Last month, 11,000 tonnes of cement were exported to the Philippines, and a company official told the Jordan Times that in order to better handle the increase of export, the cement factory and the Aqaba port authority installed a conveyor belt to load the clinker from trucks directly onto ships.

League

(Continued from page 1)

office of the Arab Organisation for Education, Culture, and Science in Tunis.

"There has been a decision today to return the Arab League general secretariat from its temporary base in Tunis to its permanent headquarters in Cairo," MENA quoted Abdul Meguid as saying.

"Egypt has always been keen to reach an agreement with Tunis because of the strong ties between the Egyptian and Tunisian leaderships," Abdul Meguid said. Tunis, which is constructing a multi-million building for the league, had said before it would not oppose an Arab summit vote to return the headquarters to Cairo.

Moscow talks open

(Continued from page 1)

differs from that of 30-40 years ago."

Meeting separately Sunday, a group of opposition deputies said they would oppose the establishment of the new presidency before the country can agree on new relations among its republics. But it decided not to nominate a candidate to oppose Gorbachev for president, leaders said.

The proposed changes include the scrapping of articles six and seven of the constitution, which guarantee the party's monopoly on power, and the introduction of a president with sweeping powers including the right to rule by decree.

The plenum was expected to endorse Gorbachev as the party's candidate for the post, leaving his election by the congress this week a virtual formality.

TASS said the plenum would set a firm date for the party's 28th congress, already brought forward to late June or early July this year, at which it will set out its political and economic programme for the next five years.

The plenum was also due to set out the process for elections to the party congress and the broad lines of its pre-congress campaign, aimed at reversing a sharp decline in popular support for the organisation.

Soviet Television, in its midday news programme, said Gorbachev had made a series of proposals in his opening address, but gave no details.

The television said the plenum — which was closed to the foreign press — was being attended by more than 300 official guests, in addition to the 250 or so central committee members.

Body found in Dead Sea; another remains missing

AMMAN (J.T.) — A thorough search in the waters of the Dead Sea conducted by the Civil Defence Department (CDD) for two persons who went missing there three days ago led to the discovery Sunday of one of the bodies, that of 27-year-old engineer Eid Ali Al Ijeh, according to a CDD official.

Brigadier Deeb Al Maani told the Jordan Times that search for Ijeh's 11-year-old nephew was continuing Sunday with the use of boats, diving gear, divers and a police helicopter.

The two went missing Friday, and the CDD in the Dead Sea area was immediately alerted, Maani said. He said that the boy had gone swimming, but failed to return. His uncle went searching for him in water at a time when the waves were high due to the blowing of high easterly winds, Maani said.

The high waves probably caused the two swimmers to be thrown deep into the sea, making it difficult to find them, Maani added. He said that search would continue for the still missing body.

Jordan, UAE discuss cooperation in energy

AMMAN (Petra) — Talks between a joint delegation from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA) headed by Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Thabet Al Taher and a United Arab Emirates (UAE) delegation headed by Minister of Electricity and Water Hamid Ben Nasir Al-Oweiss started here Sunday.

The talks centred on means of further enhancing bilateral relations and cooperation in the field of energy and electricity in addition to technical consultations.

Taher stressed Jordan's interest in enhancing inter-Arab cooperation and referred in particular to relations between Jordan and the UAE.

Oweiss also expressed his country's desire to boost bilateral cooperation in the area of energy,

electricity and water, and noted in particular the advanced levels Jordan has achieved in the field of energy.

Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary General Ibrahim Badran reviewed the main areas of work at the ministry and outlined the duties performed by the ministry's various departments and sections.

JEA Director General of the Natural Resources Authority Mohammad Abu Ajameh reviewed the authority's efforts in the field of oil and gas exploration and in utilising local resources, such as oil shale.

Earlier Sunday, Taher and Oweiss and the delegation accompanying him visited the computer department of the JEA, the JEA control and monitoring centre and the JEA training centre at Hashimieh.

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- 20MB HARD DISK
- ARABIC/LATIN KEYBOARD
- 8503 MONO DISPLAY
- MOUSE

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Jordan Times advertising department.

Israel vs NPT

ISRAEL'S constant attempts to abort peace efforts in the Middle East underscores once again the urgency of having all countries in the region sign and ratify the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT) which entered into force twenty years ago. One hundred and forty states have already joined the treaty which had been hailed ever since its inception as the most widely accepted arms control instrument in contemporary history and the primary legal barrier to nuclear proliferation. Israel has notably refused to repeated calls and appeals of the community of nations to sign and ratify the treaty and abide by its terms. The direct consequence of this Israeli obstinacy has been to preclude other Middle Eastern countries from ratifying the treaty as well. It will be recalled that Egypt has understandably refrained from ratifying this treaty unless Israel did so. Alas till this late hour, and in spite of all the danger signs that peace in the Middle East is no longer in the offing, Israel persists in defying all the appeals of the international community to accept this treaty. There is now a growing fear that the next round of fighting in the Middle East could very well go nuclear. Meanwhile, the Arab countries which have signed and ratified this treaty in a bid to encourage Israel to do the same have fallen under increasing pressures to acquire other forms of mass destructive weapons in an effort to neutralise the Israeli monopoly on the acquisition of hundreds of nuclear bombs and their means of delivery. Thus the likelihood of proliferating the acquisition of chemical and biological weapons, dubbed as the poor countries nuclear weapons, cannot be ruled out and must be viewed and considered in the context of Israel's obstinacy against signing and ratifying the NPT. And with the prospects of ever resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict on the negotiating table further declining, the probability of another war breaking out in the Middle East, in which mass destructive weapons are likely to be deployed, have likewise increased and heightened to a new and dangerous level. Against this ominous backdrop, the least that one can hope for is the elimination of all prospects for the deployment of mass destructive weapons in any future Arab-Israeli confrontation by their nuclear, chemical or biological. Having taken the initiative to join the NPT right from the start, the Arab states await an immediate Israeli response before they can be expected to renounce chemical and biological weapons. It goes without saying that had Israel accepted to negotiate with the Arab side in earnest, there would be no need for the introduction of any mass-destructive weaponry in the area. Regrettably there are no solid signs that Israel means business and wants and seeks an honourable peace treaty with all the Arab parties. Its alarming foot-dragging over U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's proposal to kick off Israeli-Palestinian talks is the best proof yet that Israel seeks the acquisition of Arab territories and not peace with them. By opting for war instead of peace Israel is clearly flirting with disaster especially in the wake of the introduction of nuclear and other mass-destructive weapons in the region. That is why there is the urgency of reversing the tide in the Middle East armament. This could be achieved when and if Israel joins the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty. Otherwise the entire region and its peoples are doomed to fight their next war with mass-destructive weapons.

JORDAN PRESS EDITORIALS

THE heroic struggle of the Arab people of Jerusalem was hailed Sunday by Al Ra'i Arabic daily newspaper. The paper said that women, men and children have all come out over the past few days to express their protest and strong condemnation against continued occupation of Arab land, and the holy shrines in Jerusalem. The paper said that the Israelis had ruled out the possibility of watching the Arab people of the holy city coming out in force to show their rejection and their condemnation of continued occupation. It said that the Israelis had thought they would prove to the world that Jerusalem was like Geneva, a quiet and peaceful city, with the Arab people totally subdued and conforming to the will of the occupying power.

A columnist in Al Ra'i Arabic daily on Sunday urges the government to come to the aid of Public Transport Corporation (PTC) which is becoming more and more of use to the public in view of population growth and the corporation's expansion. Salah Abdul Samad says that the PTC had been able to honour its financial commitments to the government and creditors, and was able to pay service on the loans amounting to JD 400,000. But in view of the rise in the operational costs, spare parts and the expansion of PTC routes, the management has found it more and more difficult to honour their commitments in full. The writer says that as the charges for transport fares did not change, more and more people are now benefiting from the PTC buses day and night, especially under the current difficult economic situation. The PTC, the writer added, is finding it more difficult to ensure sufficient spare parts due to a rise in their cost, thus it could be forced to cut down on its services, which is most undesirable under the present conditions.

Sawt Al Sheab daily referred to the Arab League's 93rd meeting in Tunis at the foreign ministers level. The paper said that subjects referred to these ministers include developments in the Palestine problem, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the intifada, ways to confront Jewish influx into Palestine and other related matters. Though such a meeting could be useful, it would have been far better if the Arabs met at the leaders level because the questions on the agenda are of crucial importance for the destiny of the Arab Nation, the paper noted. It said that the Arab Nation does not need resolutions on paper alone, but rather actions to back the words, and meaningful measures that can deter the enemy's plots and thwart its plans.

Weekly Political Pulse

Rising cost of living is prescription for trouble

By Waleed Sadi

IT MIGHT be good economics to follow faithfully the dictates of the International Monetary Fund in Jordan but it is not good politics. The disturbances that occurred in the heartland of the Kingdom last summer cannot and should not be kept too far from the minds of our policy-makers, since their root causes are still there. The creeping inflationary trends in the country are pushing the patience of the great majority of Jordanians to the limit and every one knows what usually happens after the boiling point has been passed. With the government more determined than ever to keep the lid tight on wage increases across the board, there will come a time when the patience of the poverty-stricken Jordanians will wear very thin. It is a no-win situation for the government with no happy solutions in sight. To relax its austerity economic and fiscal policies would indeed spell economic difficulties for the country and most of its people. Yet to adhere faithfully to the letter and spirit of these policies can also spell political disaster. What exacerbates the crisis even more is the absence of medium policies that could offer concurrent solutions to our economic as well as our political woes. In such a case, when one must make a difficult choice I would opt for compromising our economic well-being for the sake of political stability. There are many reasons that one can advance in support of this unpopular economic thesis. To begin with, there is fear that opting for the sound economic path could be tantamount to killing the very life

that one is aspiring to save. What value is there in saving Jordan economically when it that process we get closer to jeopardising the very life that we are trying to save. If Jordan and Jordanians are truly in dire difficulties and must walk a tightrope between two probable acute problems, there is more wisdom and hope in selecting the lesser evil, for it at least would give us more breathing space and time.

Notwithstanding how as unpopular and fraught with danger this brinkmanship policy that calls for upgrading political considerations over economic and fiscal objectives might be, it should be still salvageable and less objectionable if we start by trimming down our governmental expenditures where they are fatty and not vital to our basic needs. Any such savings can then be earmarked for measures that lead support to internal and the well-being of the poor among us. This is clearly no prescription for cutting down on vital expenses, especially in these dangerous times when the country is subjected to series of threats and dangers. Rather it is a call for streamlining our expenses with a view to making it even more cost-effective and efficient across the board. Many governmental and even private expenditures can also be trimmed with a view to transfer all such savings to the benefit of the rank and file Jordanians, be they soldiers, policemen or workers, who are bearing the brunt of the rising cost of living and more than

their share of the national economic woes and difficulties.

The moral of this writing is to caution that the yellow light is flashing ever more brightly across in our skies and foretelling the imminent dangers in the months ahead. There is fear that the country is fast approaching the danger point when the yellow signal may turn red unless the policy-makers begin to take seriously enough the depth of the danger posed by the phenomenal rise in the cost of living in the country. It is also an occasion for the rest of the Arab governments, especially those whose revenues are abundant and plentiful, to come to the rescue of Jordan and Jordanians. Maybe we in Jordan have overstated the fact that the country constitutes the first line of defence for the entire Arab Nation and Arab Order to the extent that the real meaning of the message got lost. Yet the grim fact remains that a weakened Jordan is a prescription for a sick Arab Order. The sooner this message gets across the minds and hearts of the Arab countries the better it would be for them and us. Perhaps now and in the face of the new catastrophes awaiting the Arab World in the aftermath of massive Jewish immigration to Israel and all the dangers that entails, not only for front Arab states but also to the heartland of the Arab Nation. May the sleeping Arab giant wake up after all and in time to rescue the Arabs from yet another series of disasters.

Starving in silence: Famine and censorship

The following article is reprinted from The Article 19 Bulletin.

CENSORSHIP in its many guises is a key factor in allowing whole communities to starve in silence.

It has been said that famines cannot occur in a country with a free press: while this is not always borne out by the facts it is less likely that the distress of famine victims can be ignored if they have a voice. The sight of starving children appears on television screens throughout the world with depressing regularity. What is not so well advertised is the fact that famine is a preventable disaster but the fundamental requirement for preventive action is accurate and timely information.

Food shortage leading to famine and starvation usually starts locally and spreads to wider areas. There is, therefore, a warning period with many signals of impending famine but it is rare for those in a position to help to do so until starvation is visible. By then it is often too late to intervene to save lives. The way to avert famine is to act on its earliest indications and to set up small, local feeding programmes before starvation sets in. This

requires knowledge of vulnerable communities and a commitment by international agencies and the government to act speedily. Donor agencies are sometimes reluctant to act unless there is popular pressure for them to do so and this in turn depends crucially on media interest.

Africa over the past two decades has become the heartland of famine. This is due to environmental, demographic and economic factors but coverage of events in Africa also suffers from other major constraints.

These include a declining media interest in the developing world unless there is special relevance for the West. For example, the BBC had up to 12 experienced journalists permanently stationed in Africa in the 1960s. Today BBC TV has only two representatives in sub-Saharan Africa.

There are technological constraints such as the lack of communications and difficulty of access to local areas due to war or bureaucracy.

News reporters also have difficulty in selling a story, however dramatic, to the western media. African affairs are of little interest and in the words of one

BBC television producer: "Africa isn't an easy story to tell... and famine isn't really a nice news item."

If, to add to these constraints, there is a system of censorship at the national level which includes physical censorship in the form of arrest, torture and killing of dissenters and using physical means to control population movements, catastrophes can and do occur without the world knowing. This happened in Ethiopia in 1983 and 1984 and in China during the period of the "Great Leap Forward" in 1959-1961. These two famines between them claimed more than 26 million lives according to current estimates.

In early 1983, Ethiopia was poised for famine as the spring harvest failed. By February 1983 1.3 million people had walked to the few relief camps open and by the end of 1984 it was estimated that 8 million people were suffering to varying degrees from starvation. There had been several warnings of the scale of events to come. In 1982 and 1983 urgent and repeated warnings were made by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), the major ministry concerned with early warning and famine relief in Ethiopia. The RRC had set up two major international meetings to include all multi-lateral, bilateral and private donors in Addis Ababa and New York. Figures were produced and as a result a few U.N. missions were sent to Ethiopia and a small number of food pledges were made. But western donors were cynical. "They come up with figures which nobody believes," said an EEC official. Another admitted that they tend to divide food aid requests from governments by ten!

Some television coverage was achieved, but it was met with over lack of interest from major western donors. In September 1984, by a series of coincidences and luck, a BBC film team got into Northern Ethiopia and filmed children dying. It was riveting television and suddenly it was also news. The film footage was satellite around the world and the scramble to send food to Ethiopia began.

The failure to act on the information that was available cost many lives. A conspiracy of silence — fuelled by layers of mistrust between the Ethiopian government and international donors — allowed donors to ignore the early warnings, and to dismiss them as attempts on the part of the Ethiopian government to receive food aid in order to feed the military.

The Ethiopian government ensured that news of the famine was largely suppressed until the celebrations for the tenth anniversary of the revolution were over. Nor did the government allow free access to the areas most affected by famine, because of the war and because of the harsh resettlement programme being imposed in the north.

When the emergency relief programme finally got started, aid agency and media personnel were denied access to camps where there were outbreaks of cholera. The presence of the disease was denied and several thousands more died as a result.

There was a lack of any credible information on the numbers of people affected; where they were and what resources were held at local and household levels. Donors were reluctant to pour food into a country without knowing how much was needed and to where it should be directed. The manipulation of information while the relief effort was being implemented led to constant and conflicting rumours.

This marred the relief programme which, already late, became increasingly fragmented with constant government interference and donor high-handedness.

The great famine in China

The last great famine in China happened between 1959 and 1969. It is the least known modern holocaust and certainly the most devastating. Its history is only now beginning to unfold. The famine occurred as a result of at least two consecutive seasons of drought in some areas and the deliberate efforts on the part of Mao Zedong to alter the economic basis of rural communities. The lack of reliable information and persistent disinformation issued by everyone from village to central government level were disastrous. The famine was compounded by official denials both at home and abroad that there was famine at all, that any relief was necessary and also by the belief that peasants had under-reported their crops when they had in fact over-reported them. Isolation from any foreign famine relief became a source of national pride and China became, behind a wall of propaganda, estranged from the one nation in a position to help, the USSR.

The facts now being unearthed by researchers indicate censorship and disinformation on a massive scale. The deliberate and widespread suppression of information allowed the government to continue with what were clearly lethal policies. The famine coincided with a major drive towards collectivisation which was advantageous to some of the peasantry but increased grain procurement quotas accompanied the new policy. Newly appointed commune officials who were out of touch with realistic production figures for their own

areas were rewarded by central government for providing exaggerated estimates of harvests.

The 1958 crop was estimated at double the previous year's harvest. As a result, the government ordered a 5 per cent reduction in the acreage sown and there was an overall reduction of 25 million tonnes of grain. But the government procurement demands remained high at about 45 per cent of the total crop and meanwhile Mao Zedong assumed that peasants were underestimating their crop by about 15 per cent to avoid tax and quotas. In fact food production declined from 200 million tonnes in 1958 to 145 million tonnes in 1960/61.

Up until 1961 local officials continued to collect grain quotas based on entirely false estimates. In the extreme north, for example, more than 80 per cent of the crop went to the state and starvation occurred in what had been highly fertile regions. The local press reported the famine. Newspapers in Henan and Hunan gave accounts of hunger while continuing to assert that the overall harvests were higher than ever in an attempt to justify the continuing procurement pressures.

The actual mechanics of disinformation and the way in which it affects access to food is a chilling story.

Government cover-ups and manipulation of information at the height of famines cost untold numbers of lives and are only possible because of prevailing censorship at every level of society. Each actor in the drama can turn away from responsibility precisely because information is suppressed and censorship operates. It is after all a great deal more difficult for governments to continue to manipulate information when thousands of starving victims are daily shown on television throughout the world.

Austria finds new confidence in East European openings

By Hester Abrams
Reuters

VIENNA — Pioneering Austrian businessmen are heading East in a rush to cash in on the new markets emerging on their doorstep.

When the physical barriers between Austria and its Central European neighbours collapsed along with Communist power, Austrians were among the first to offer advice on how to build a market-driven economy.

Just a few months ago, everyone was travelling to Budapest, capital of the fastest transforming Soviet bloc state.

Now Prague — which has committed itself to a Western-style market system — seems to be the favourite destination for entrepreneurs with vision.

In the latest official visit, on March 8, Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock took a team of businessmen on the 300-kilometre trip to the Czechoslovakian capital.

"Economic contacts are springing up again," said Felix Butschek of Vienna's Institute for Comparative Economic Studies, predicting thriving exports and a rejuvenation of Austria's border zone with Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

When Eastern Europe was Communist, Austria had a good foothold in the markets of its cultural and historical neighbours, sending them seven to eight per cent of its total exports, Butschek said.

While stock market dealers talk of "East bloc fantasy" firing an historic boom on Vienna's small bourse, others are dreaming of an economic confederation of "mitteleuropas", recapturing the closeness that Danube states had before 1918 when they were part of the Habsburg Empire.

But many say Austria's application to join the European Community must take priority over any other regional cooperation.

For the time being, Butschek believes, Austria will gain most from bilateral activities with its neighbours.

Several firms have already

announced new ventures.

Household name brands such as Anker bread and Schoeps casual wear will soon reach the variety-starved consumers of the East. Energy company Verbundgesellschaft plans to clean up Bulgarian and Soviet power stations in exchange for electricity.

Along with plans for joint ventures, management training and financing, many Austrian businessmen travelling to the East take vital experience of building a successful economy from rubble.

Herbert Krejci, secretary-general of the Austrian Federation of Industrialists, sees parallels between the emergence of East European countries from Communism and Austria's recovery after World War II.

"First we were occupied, then we had a part-nationalised, part-privatised economy. And we still developed well," he said.

"Our neighbours see Austria a little as a model — a market economy with strong social services," Butschek said, adding that Austria had fewer strikes than any other industrialised country.

Austria's economic success — yielding six per cent growth and a near balanced current account in 1989, with only 2.9 per cent year-on-year inflation in January — dangles an enviable carrot before East bloc states keen to go the Austrian way.

The Alpine state is campaigning vigorously to become the major East-West bridge in a changing Europe.

For years a centre for barter trade with the Soviet bloc, Vienna is hosting with other European cities to house a planned European development bank and in 1995 the city will host a world exhibition jointly with Budapest.

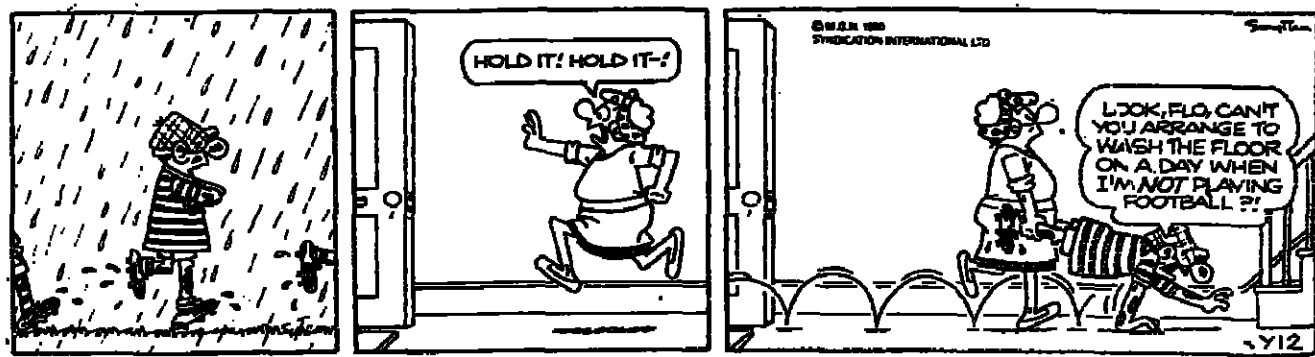
The government is preparing an East-West fund to offer both financing and insurance to joint ventures and has set up a 60 million schilling (\$5 million) training programme for East European bloc managers.

But banker Walter Schuster of Goetzcentrale warns against blind optimism about the investment opportunities in the East.

Mutt'n' Jeff



Andy Capp



Peanuts



Iraqi talent in abstraction on display in Amman

By Nelly Lama
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Seven Iraqi artists, pioneer among others in the world of abstraction, have come to exhibit here in Amman. This is a joint venture between the Abdul-Hamid Shoman Foundation and the Saddam Centre for Fine Arts in Baghdad, where the most avant-garde artists in Iraq exhibit the finest examples of modern art.

The exhibition is a living proof of a perspective remark made by President Husein: "The artists like a politician; they both make life in a advanced form." And so they do.

Shaker Hassan, a pioneer artist who since the fifties painted concrete figurative iconography filled with folk motifs, has now shifted towards abstraction and calligraphy depicting the concept of the world as felt and as thought, with an emphasis on local popular culture. Calligraphy to him is no more than a free form of graffiti with mystical connections, scribbled on a derelict wall. He calls this tendency to work on the surface "one - dimensionism." A large canvas covered with mud and glue, bearing dark outlined earth colours, shows painted cracks, striations etched into the thick texture; odd brushstrokes, dripping paint, giving an overall impression of weathering, of what the wall experienced through the passing of time, diary of those who passed by, children, adults, each leaving his impression. Religious texts show the artist's own Sufist tendencies.

The letters used are not symbols. Aragon, the French art critic, explains that when a child doodles, his scribbles do not make sense; they are expressions of his existence, his subconscious and his creativity. Shaker Hassan's letters, numbers and signs have the same connotations.

An active member of the Baghdad Fine Arts Group, Shaker Hassan "supplemented his paintings and drawings with a great deal of written enunciation of the group's main ideas — which were often his own," explains Iraqi art critic Jabra Jabra. "His writings over the last 25 years have come to form a sort of body of doctrine which, though not easy to define, has had a considerable influence on the direction the Iraqi art movement has taken."

Another artist, Salem Dahagh, juxtaposes dark geometric leather-textured squares over a more ethereal space of large tinted brushstrokes; material v.s. ethereal. Small geometric spaces, painted flatly with great colour intensity are introduced as a surprise element into the non-colour vastness. This sudden entry of a new element, unusual in the painting, is obvious in the works of many Iraqi artists, considering the fact that they adhere to the same school and often work together.

Rafiq Al Nashri follows suit. He introduces a new idea, a little calligraphy or a small colour chart which appears almost miraculously at the bottom of a painting, giving the impression of departing or slipping away. We find more dominant motifs common to all his work. A repeated horizon line, always there acting as a dominant force, is either overlapped by a biomorphic shape or acts as a barrier to one. A row of flat intensely coloured dots float in space forming a curve or straight line. Flat-coloured areas contrast with shaded textured ones. This is probably the result of his intense experience in the graphic arts. In fact it was he who founded the graphic arts section of the Institute of Fine Arts of Baghdad.

Ismael Fattah, renowned as a sculptor whose monuments crown the streets of Baghdad, paints his own personal experience in mixed media acrylics, watercolour and ink. They are spontaneous studies that he later turns into sculptural reliefs, he explains: "Making a sculpture needs time. I found that with painting I can be more spontaneous and more true to the feelings of the moment," he says.

Heads, painted informally leaving empty spaces within the outlines, shaded with violent scribbling rather than hatching, or with flat black are placed within a grid of windows. One head faces us while another looks away and is barred with a X. This expressionism and the contrast of dark and light areas, the violent rhythms, the gestural rendering often reach heights of emotional drama.

Fattah accompanied the exhibition and presented a slide show on the work of his fellow artists. He showed the development of his own graphic oeuvre, and finally rendered homage to the late Jawad Selim, his professor "... to whom I owe everything. Without him I would not be, and Iraqi art could never have been the same."

Alli Taleb is interested in the theatre. He constantly portrays in props in a sort of transparent manner that seems to hint rather than state. He places them within geometric spaces that show the dimensions of dark and light. A mask always lies on its side in the centre of a painting. A square within a square surround it forming a stage setting. The eye of the mask, painted more than once, seems to create movement and drama.

In one of his paintings, "The Happening," he conveys a surrealistic expression. At first glance the mask appears as a monolithic crumpled mass, a sort of landscape. As one moves away, he retraces the face. A bar of coloured brushstrokes at the top of the canvas recalls those colours that are found in the monolith.

Saad Al Kasbi's work has an overall milky smooth finish in mixed media including sand. His flat backgrounds are interrupted by thick strips of calligraphy. Stylised human figures with wide shoulders like the Sumerian worshippers seem to override time and space. Drawn schematically in raised linear outlines, they repeatedly overlap one another retaining a sense of anonymity within a vast abstracted space, hence the name of the paintings "Desert." Gradual asymmetry makes the paintings more vivid since they are devoid of any living colour. Progression of the subtle tonality is another vivifying factor.

Mohammed Mahreddin displays oil paintings that talk about "Our Contemporary World." Among large abstract spaces we find transparencies of a classical sculpture, or of a head from Rude's Marseillaise screaming revolution, or hands writing, all hints of old ideas. Imprints of hands bring us back to age-old individualism. The contemporary on the other hand, is depicted with symbols like mathematical calculations and linear geometric drawings. Pipes recall industrialisation. He creates beautiful analogous harmonies in his colour schemes.

"Most Iraqi artists are deeply concerned with dilemmas of twentieth century man and their own relevance to their times," writes critic Jabra. "Whatever originality they may possess is connected, in one way or another, with the grass roots of their society, even though the connection may not always be readily visible."

Jordan was tantalised to see these works and was touched by the humility and wide knowledge of Ismael Fattah, who happens to have taught many of our renowned painters and sculptors.

The exhibition hall at the Shoman Foundation will be open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Thursdays till 8:00 p.m. It closes on Friday.



One of the works of Shaker Hassan

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"Most Iraqi artists are deeply

Microrobots open doors to newer forms of sabotage and warfare

By Bernd Debusmann
Reuter

WASHINGTON — Could robots the size of specks of dust serve as soldiers and spies in wars of the future, wreaking havoc with enemy computers or even taking control of an enemy general's brain?

As scientists experiment with new machines so small they can barely be seen with the naked eye, military planners are beginning to wonder how a new generation of micromachines could be used in war.

Microtechnology, a new and fast-growing branch of technology, has already produced a range of tiny devices that could be taken from science fiction — machines so small they can be inhaled.

Researchers at the University of California at Berkeley have made a silicon motor the width of a hair that can rotate 500 times a minute. At ATT's Bell Laboratories a tiny, four-legged mechanical bug is reported to be able to align microscopic optical fibres.

At Japan's Tokyo University work is underway on a robot so small it could travel through the bloodstream and into organs, inspecting, or perhaps even exciting, diseased tissue.

While the bloodstream submarine is expected to take another two years to develop, according to scientific publications, a comparatively gigantic forerunner has already been tested.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, have developed a pill containing a silicon thermometer and a transmitter that can broadcast temperature changes inside a person's body to a recording device.

Military applications of microtechnology are rarely discussed in public. But the latest issue of Signal, the official publication of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, provided a glimpse into how the military view the new field.

An article by Charles Petty, a former Pentagon official and president of a consulting firm called Special Defence Services, suggested a variety of uses — including microrobots that "could be used to inflict control over a subject."

Another possible application could be to place microrobots inside the circuits of computers, where they could lie dormant for years — the mechanical equivalent of the espionage world's "sleeper" spy.

Activating the microsaboteur "could be by radar impulse of specified duration, frequency or even polarisation (which) could cause the gnat to manoeuvre into a position to wreak the most havoc."

Such devices would be virtually impossible to detect, according to Petty, because they would look like just another piece of debris in the sabotaged circuit.

On the battlefield gnat-sized airborne robots with infra-red sensors could locate enemy troops and perform pre-programmed tasks.

In counter-terrorism operations miniature devices could infiltrate a building or room where hostages are held, monitor conversations and pinpoint terrorists and hostages so a human attack team could strike with precision.

"By the early 21st century, machines smaller than pinheads could power thousands of little robots — patrolling security areas," Petty wrote.

In a non-aggressive role microrobots could revolutionise the operation of military aircraft, sensing defects in circuits and correcting faults with such speed "that only a flashing light on a telepanel would alert an aviator that a near tragedy had been overcome."

The first steps towards such applications have already been taken. A small army of silicon sensors at more than 250 points in the U.S. space shuttle's engines measure temperature and performance. Pressure in the cabin and hydraulic system are also monitored by tiny sensors.

A 1988 report to the U.S. National Science Foundation listed dozens of uses for micromachines, including miniature parts that could drive a new generation of tiny computers and tiny saws and scissors for remote-control surgery.

Experts say the United States is leading the international pack in microtechnology and some of the biggest names in industry and research institutes are involved — ATT, IBM, General Motors, Ford, Hewlett-Packard, Dupont, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Berkeley, Stanford and the Naval Research Laboratory.

But the American lead is being challenged by Japan and West Germany, scientists say. Toyota, Mitsubishi, Matsushita and Seiko are investing in microtechnology research and West Germany is at the forefront of new techniques to shape microstructures. German researchers are using X-rays to etch three-dimensional structures on the surface of computer chips. The process can be adapted to make tiny movable parts.

The gears, levers, screws and axles researchers want to develop for microdevices must be thousands of times smaller than the smallest available now — and the problems of lubricating and cooling such items are mind-boggling.

At the leading edge of research into microdevices are some U.S. scientists working in even smaller dimensions. Known as nanotechnologists — the prefix nano means a billionth — these researchers' ultimate dream features micromachines that could build finished products atom by atom.

While the concept is still considered outlandish in much of the international scientific and engineering communities, Japan's ministry of international trade and industry has listed it as one of the most critical technologies for the next century.

Floating eye hospital winds up Mideast mission

THE SOVIET floating eye hospital, Floks, is to leave the Middle East next month.

Floks management say no more operations will be performed on board the ship, which is currently berthed in Jabel Ali near Dubai, after April 5 though diagnoses will continue up until April 13.

"Some Soviet trained doctors will remain in the UAE to carry out post-operative checks on the those patients who undergo operations in the final weeks of our stay here," said A Floks spokeswoman.

Doctor Minas Atamian has been appointed on-board medical liaison officer to help patients who may have problems or queries.

Floks arrived in Dubai last October for a six-month stay. Ali was chosen as its first major operation port of call outside of the Eastern bloc because of an unprecedented demand from Middle East patients for Soviet eye surgery.

By the end of last month a total of 9,607 people had visited the ship in Jabel Ali to undergo diagnoses — more than one quarter later underwent surgery.

Almost a third of the patients came from the UAE but the figure also includes 1,352 from Oman; 1133 from Saudi Arabia; 741 from Kuwait; 541 from Bahrain; 478 from Qatar; 413 from Jordan and 283 from Iran.

The Petr Pervy, a former car carrier, was converted into a hospital ship last year at a cost of \$12.75 million. The brainchild of famed Soviet eye surgeon, Professor Svyatoslav Eyodorov, the vessel houses a seven-state computerised diagnostics centre and multi-specialist operating theatre.

Teams of Eyodorov-trained surgeons on board carry out the latest eye micro-surgery techniques including keratoplasty, vaser-reconstruction and negative lens implantation, which have previously been carried out only in Moscow.

On April 14, the Petr Pervy will be dry docked in Dubai. It will later sail to a Mediterranean port. — Bas Communications.



The Floks floating eye hospital — just one more month in the Middle East.

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Agassi stuns Becker

INDIAN WELLS, CALIF. (AP) — Andre Agassi won nine straight games and stunned top-seeded Boris Becker to move into the final of the champions cup tennis tournament.

"This was probably my biggest win," the sixth-seeded Agassi said of his 6-4, 6-1 victory Saturday, the first time in four career meetings that he has beaten the West German.

Agassi will play Sweden's Stefan Edberg in Sunday's title match. The second-seeded Edberg advanced with a 6-4, 6-1 victory over Jim Courier.

Edberg and Agassi have not lost a set in their matches in this \$1 million tournament. The winner will receive \$125,000 and the loser \$65,800.

Agassi won the last four games of the first set against Becker. He was down a break point in the ninth game but won the next seven points, then went up 5-0 in the second set.

Agassi lost only 12 points on

his serve in the last eight games. "I was just hanging in there," Agassi said. "I wanted him to hit a lot of balls. That ninth game (of the first set) was a crucial game. If he'd have won the game, the results could have been vice-versa. I would still have hung in there whether I won or lost that game."

"Anytime you can beat somebody like Boris, it's great. I was surprised to win the second set so easy. I kind of anticipated that he wouldn't be coming into the net like he did in the Davis Cup, or when he played Jay Berger. I heard he did that against Berger, so I just wanted him to hit a lot of balls."

"Oh, that was not on my mind," Agassi said. "It's just another match, another day."

Said Becker: "It was going quite good in the first set, then at 4-all I had a break point, and somehow in the second set my game just fell apart, more or less. He was playing so well, but once I

was out on the court I didn't want to give it away."

"Maybe I played too much tennis the last few weeks. It's tougher now; even the doubles is tough. There's been a lot of three sets. Maybe I was trying to put pressure on him."

Edberg needed only 76 minutes to beat Courier, his longest match so far of the tournament. Edberg hit 18 winners at the net compared to just four for Courier.

"The difference today was that I hit a lot of first serves. I played solid tennis. I forced him to make mistakes," Edberg said. "The big court helped me. Before, when I played him I was running all over the place. It was important for me to break him again (in the first set)."

"He's tough to play, but I put a lot of pressure on him. I had to get a lot of first serves in; you have to do that against him. He sort of rushed the points, but



Andre Agassi

that's the way he plays. "If he gets impatient, he makes

mistakes. He might get away with it against somebody else."

Algeria favoured for African cup final

ALGIERS (R) — Algeria, buoyed by tens of thousands of ecstatic but turbulent fans, are on course to win their first-ever African nations cup after a decade of near-misses.

In Monday's semi-finals they are favourites to beat Senegal while Zambia are expected to triumph over Nigeria.

The Algerians' powerful attack has brought them 10 goals in three games. They crushed the Ivory Coast last week and have star performers in strikers Rabah Madjer and Djamel Menad and defender Fodhil Megharra.

Their devoted fans will also give them a powerful psychological boost. But the African Football Confederation (CAF) has appealed for strict security after Algerian fans pelted Egyptian players with rubbish when Egypt

lost to Nigeria last Tuesday. The CAF also deplored the "aggressive and unfortunate attitude" of Algerian fans when Algeria beat Egypt 2-0 last Thursday.

Algeria was furious with Egypt for initially deciding to pull out of the eight-nation cup over fears of crowd trouble. Violence marred a World Cup qualifying match in Cairo last November when Egypt defeated Algeria.

The Algerians have an extra rest day before the semi-final and will stay in the capital to play the match after finishing first in Group A.

Senegal will have to travel to Algiers from the eastern city of Annaba, venue of its Group B matches.

Their professionals are both an asset and a handicap. Jules Bocande, Roger Mende and

Abdoulaye Diallo are internationally known but their engagements elsewhere have prevented the team from acquiring stability. French trainer Claude Leroy must constantly deal with the clubs that employ these players and never knows in advance whom he will be able to field.

Zambia, who have been showing impressive cohesion, are tipped to win the other semi-final at Annaba. They defeated defending champions Cameroun for the spot and have some brilliant individual players such as goalkeeper David Chikabala and striker Webby Chikabala.

Their Nigerian opponents seem the weakest of the semi-finalists. Crushed by Algeria 1-5 on opening night, they later came back to beat Ivory Coast and Egypt.

Oldham move closer to Wembley double after gazing from afar

LONDON (R) — For almost a century, Wembley has been little more than a distant dream for Oldham Athletic.

Until this season, the closest the little Second Division club came to any English Soccer Cup final appearance was defeat in the Football Association (F.A.) Cup semifinal of 1913.

Ten years later, they left the First Division.

But now, 90 years after their foundation, "the Latics" are on course for promotion and a Wembley Cup final double.

In midweek they clinched a league up final appearance

against holders Nottingham Forest and Saturday they sent last year's losing finalist Everton out of the F.A. Cup.

The fifth round second replay set them up for tough quarter-final against league leaders Aston Villa but, undefeated in 34 consecutive matches on their controversial artificial pitch at Boundary Park, their confidence is soaring.

In Saturday's reduced First Division programme, Villa beat Luton 2-0 to take over at the top from Liverpool, whose F.A. Cup quarter-final took them to Queen's Park Rangers Sunday.

Liverpool, two points behind, have a game in hand and are six points ahead of third-placed Arsenal, the defending champions, who struggled to a 1-1 draw at relegation-threatened Manchester City.

For Everton, whose manager Colin Harvey was once a playing partner of Oldham's Joe Royle at Everton, defeat at Oldham was all the more galling since the visitors had taken the lead in the 12th minute.

To add to Harvey's agony, it was an Everton reject who scored the crucial goal from a penalty in extra-time.

Ian Marshall, bought from Everton two years ago and playing as an emergency striker to replace the injured Andy Ritchie, has needlessly felled in the area with the score at 1-1.

The ball was heading harmlessly for the corner line and Marshall was already on his way out of the area when defender Neil McDonald brought him down with a clumsy tackle.

"I never thought the game was out of reach. It was always there to be won. We were only going to lose if we did something silly — and we did," Harvey said after the match.

"A couple of unfortunate mistakes cost us the game."

Royle himself refused to meet the media after the match, apparently because he was unhappy with an article in a national newspaper that had appeared Saturday morning.

In the other F.A. Cup match of the day, Cambridge failed in their bid to become the first Fourth Division club to reach the semi-finals when they lost 1-0 to Crystal Palace.

Despite the lure of a large bottle of whisky and a small cash bonus per player should they have won, Palace dashed their dreams with a soft and scrappy 77th minute goal.

Palace manager Steve Coppell, unimpressed by his opponents' bizarre habit of dousing themselves in cold water before the kick-off, said later he had found it hard to get excited by the match. "I'm not really that excited," he said. "I get more excited about league football than cup football."

Villa manager Graham Taylor was excited with his players' performance, however, singling out 22-year-old winger Tony Daley in particular for his devastating 29th-minute solo goal.

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National Hockey League roundup

BLOOMINGTON, Minnesota (AP) — Brian Mullen's power-play goal with 8:58 left in regulation time gave the red-hot New York Rangers a 2-2 overtime tie with the Minnesota North Stars Saturday.

Mike Richter made 33 saves, including 18 in the first period, as the Rangers improved to 6-1 in their last eight games and 13-4-3 in their last 20. The Rangers lead second-place Pittsburgh by seven points in the Patrick Division.

Kings 8, Penguins 2

Inglewood, California — Luc Robitaille scored three

goals during a 5:08 span in the first period and John Tonelli added a pair as Los Angeles Kings ended a four-game losing streak by routing Pittsburgh.

Robitaille, whose hat trick was his second of the season and the seventh of his career, also earned an assist on a goal by Todd Elik that gave the Kings a 7-1 lead after two periods.

Islanders 3, Bruins 3

Uniondale, New York — Doug Crossman figured in all three goals, scoring the tying goal midway through the third period, to give the New York

Islanders a 3-3 tie with the Boston Bruins.

However, the Islanders extended the NHL's current longest winless streak to 12 — 0-10-2. They haven't won since a 4-3 overtime decision over Boston Feb. 10.

The Bruins, the NHL's top team with 90 points atop the Adams Division, are 8-2-1 in their last 11 games.

Devils 9, Nordiques 3

East Rutherford, New Jersey — Peter Stastny had two goals and an assist and New Jersey tied a club record with six second-period goals as the Devils won their third

straight with a 9-3 victory over the Quebec Nordiques.

Stastny, acquired by the Devils from the Nordiques this past week, was playing only his second game for New Jersey and his first against his former team.

Capitals 4, Flyers 3

Philadelphia — Dino Ciccarelli scored the game-winner with his second goal of the night to lead the Washington Capitals to a 4-3 victory over the Philadelphia Flyers.

Washington, 3-0-1 in its last four games, remained unbeaten at the spectrum this season in four games.

Olympic candidates busy at Asian games

SAPPORO, Japan (AP) — While athletes battle for gold medals on Sapporo's snow and ice, another competition is under way in hotel suites and reception rooms, for the honour of staging future Olympic Games.

Seven members of the International Olympic Committee are in Sapporo to observe the 2nd Asian Winter Games. They and officials of the 10 national delegations at the games are the objects of the public relations campaign.

The most visible campaign is by the Japanese city of Nagano, seeking the 1998 Winter Olympics, a quarter century after Sapporo became the first Asian city to stage the winter games.

But representatives from Atlanta in the United States, Melbourne, Australia, and Toronto, Canada, have been pressing the case for their cities as hosts to the 1996 summer games. The winner is to be decided in Tokyo in September. Athens, capital of the original Olympic site, Greece, also is bidding, along with Manchester, England, and Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

Nagano will have to wait until June 1991 for the verdict on its bid against Salt Lake City in the United States and other rivals in Sweden, Italy, the Soviet Union and Spain.

Japanese Olympic Committee

President Yoshiaki Tsutsumi, the billionaire head of a railroad and hotel group, gave a reception Saturday night for the IOC members and delegation leaders, some of whom will visit Nagano after the competition here.

Nagano hopes chances will be enhanced by a desire to move the games to a different region after three European Olympics in quick succession — the 1992 summer games in Barcelona, Spain, the 1992 winter games in Albertville, France, and the 1994 winter games in Lillehammer, Norway.

The winter games are being shifted in 1994 to fall in between summer Olympic years in an effort to keep up a steady pitch of Olympic interest.

If the 1996 summer games go to the American candidate, Atlanta, Nagano figures its 1998 chances against Salt Lake City will be strengthened.

Nagano, a city of 340,000 people 200 kilometres northwest of Tokyo, previously hosted the winter Olympics in 1940 and 1968, but in both cases Japan chose to put forward Sapporo's case instead.

Its latest bid has run into some criticism from Japanese environmentalists concerned about the effects of opening a new downhill ski course on the 2,295-metre Mount Iwasage in the Japan

Alps. The privately owned mountain has been extensively logged in the past.

The city says research teams have been at work for two years on plans for environmental protection, and the surrounding areas shall be severely protected through systematic property control.

"Giving the protection of nature much consideration in preparing plans, we believe the results will be an example worth sharing with the whole world," says the city's brochure on its Olympic preparations.

Nagano's proposed competition area is Shiga Kogen, a popular ski resort on a volcanic soil plateau covered with fir and birch forests.

The resort was host to World Cup ski races in 1969.

If it succeeds in its bid, the city plans to remodel a municipal sports center for figure skating competition and build new facilities for speed skating, curling, hockey, bobsled and luge, and ski jumping.

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Contras leaving Honduras to Nicaragua Managua passes broad amnesty law

MANAGUA (R) — The Nicaraguan National Assembly has passed a law granting amnesty to public officials who may have committed crimes such as bribery and embezzlement during 10 years of Sandinista rule.

Deputies in the Sandinista-dominated legislature said the law, passed by a vote of 66-33, will protect outgoing officials from possible "witch hunts" by the new government.

The amnesty law is part of a series of laws proposed by the Sandinistas to strengthen and protect themselves before they hand over power on April 25 to the Government of Violeta Chamorro.

The law grants amnesty to public officials who may have committed offences between July 19, 1979 — the day the Sandinistas seized power in a revolution — and the moment the law takes effect. It was not clear how long it would take for the law to be signed into effect.

Original versions of the law that extended the amnesty for public officials through March 31 brought outcry from opposition leaders saying it would give officials free hand until the end of the month to rob the public coffers.

The law also grants amnesty for the U.S.-backed contra rebels as well as for possible crimes committed by Sandinista soldiers dur-

ing their war with the rebels.

The legislature is also considering a law to turn over ownership of 10,000 houses currently owned by the state to their occupants and grant university autonomy, moves which will strengthen the Sandinistas' position as an opposition party.

Meanwhile, President Daniel Ortega called for Nicaraguans to work toward a peaceful transition of government before heading Saturday for a tour of Venezuela, Chile and Brazil during which he was expected to seek support for efforts to disband the contras before the handover.

Ortega, who was soundly beaten by Chamorro in Feb. 25 elections, said in a speech that he backed the amnesty law and called for Nicaraguans to adopt a "constructive spirit" in the wake of the vote.

Meanwhile in Yamales, Honduras, some contra rebels, with guns, women and loaded mules, are quietly leaving for Nicaragua not intending to return.

"Adios Yamales," said a 34-year-old contra commander, bid-

ding farewell to the 12,000-man camp in eastern Honduras which has been his base and sanctuary for more than two years.

He was heading a troop of 60 fighters, many of whom said they were going to Nicaragua to ensure the ruling Sandinistas handed over power to their elected successors.

Senior contra officials deny any troops have left Honduras since the elections.

"We're taking personnel into Nicaragua in response to the enormous violations that the Sandinistas are committing," the commander of the returning Caracol unit told Reuters Friday.

The rebels, who will be sweltering heat during the one-week trek home, were weighed down by knapsacks, rifles and grenade launchers. Recently-issued surplus U.S. army boots, along with food rations, dangled from their packs.

"Those who don't want to leave their women behind are taking them, too," said one contra, trying to thumb a lift from a passing vehicle.

Returning guerrillas said they would refuse to be disbanded as a fighting force — as demanded by Nicaragua's outgoing government — until the Sandinista army they have fought for more than eight years was also dissolved.

But their move from Yamales threatens to complicate the already delicate task of transferring power in Nicaragua from the Sandinistas and their party-controlled military.

Last week, senior rebel commanders met a Chamorro representative for the first time and said afterwards they would continue negotiating with the president-elect over their disbandment.

Officials of the United States, which backs the contras with non-lethal aid after ceasing to arm them in 1987, have called for an orderly disbandment and guarantees that returning combatants and their families will be cared for.

Several contras said their return was hastened by a worsening climate of unrest in Nicaragua, ahead of Chamorro's inauguration of April 25.

Hatred and mistrust run deep on both sides of the civil war which has killed some 30,000 people since it broke out in the early 1980s.

The rebels' senior operations chief, a commander known as Lester, said that since March 3 the Sandinistas had been using heavily-armed helicopters to bombard rebel positions near Quilali, in northwestern Nicaragua.

Haitians begin planning for civilian government

PORT-AU-PRINCE (R) — Haiti's interim military ruler and members of the opposition are trying to thrash out terms for a civilian government following the resignation Saturday of President Prosper Avril.

Opposition members led by Father Antoine Adrien, a Catholic priest who heads a coalition of civic groups, met Saturday to work out the terms with General Gerard Abraham, Haiti's new military ruler for only 72 hours.

Opposition sources said that among the things they were trying to hammer out was whether Avril would be allowed to stay in the country or would have to leave.

Abraham, Haiti's army chief of staff, announced Saturday on national television that Avril had resigned and turned power over to him, but he said he would pass it along to a civilian interim government within 72 hours.

Abraham, 49, said he had agreed an opposition plan to create a civilian council of state which would hold elections as soon as possible.

The announcement of Avril's resignation was greeted with dancing in the streets.

Opposition politicians and diplomats said Saturday that Avril had to leave to avoid further unrest. At least three people were killed in protests against Avril Thursday. Reports on local radio said four more people died Saturday in Port-Au-Prince.

But despite calls for his departure, Avril was still in his personal residence surrounded by loyal guards as of late Saturday night, diplomats said.

An opposition coalition issued a statement saying it would not halt street protests nor give up its call for a general strike to begin Monday until Avril actually left the country.

The 52-year-old Avril, a lieutenant general who took power in a September 1988 coup, had been under pressure to resign for weeks after he cracked down on opposition leaders in January, declaring a 10-day state of siege.

There have been three coups and four governments in Haiti since February 1986, when dictator Jean Claude Duvalier fled the country after a popular uprising.

Thatcher losing support among Conservatives

LONDON (AP) — Polls in three British newspapers published Sunday show Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher losing support among her own Conservative Party lawmakers.

The polls, in the independent Sunday, the Sunday Times and The Mail on Sunday, show that roughly one-quarter of the Tory members of parliament survived believe that Thatcher should step down before the next general election. The Conservatives must call a general election before mid-1992.

The Independent on Sunday said 41 of the 171 lawmakers it polled think the prime minister should resign before the next general election. Thirteen were undecided and 113 said the prime minister should not resign.

"Such a level of disaffection with Mrs. Thatcher's continued leadership is a serious embarrassment for the government at a time when its difficulties over the poll tax have started to affect sterling and opinion polls are putting (the opposition) Labour Party up to 19 points ahead," the Independent on Sunday said.

Hostility toward a new per capita tax to fund local authority spending has brought violent demonstrations to London and other part of the country.

Shares on London Stock Exchange traded lower last week amid poll tax concerns and rumours of jitters in the Conservative Party over Thatcher's

leadership sent the pound sharply lower on foreign exchange markets.

The Sunday Times reported that 28 of the 100 lawmakers it polled believe Thatcher should either step down immediately, or before the next election. Thirteen said the prime minister should go "at a time of her choosing" and 59 said they wanted Mrs. Thatcher to lead them into the next election.

The Mail on Sunday reported that 45 of the 146 Tory backbenchers they questioned said the prime minister should consider standing down before the next general election.

The Mail on Sunday also reported that some Conservative Party lawmakers planned to ask Michael Heseltine, the former defence secretary, to launch a campaign for leadership of the party.

Heseltine denied the report. "I have always made it clear that I think Mrs. Thatcher will lead us into the next election and that the Conservative Party will win it," said Heseltine, 56.

"Poppycock," said Mrs. Thatcher when asked about a possible plot to remove her.

A fourth newspaper, the Sunday Telegraph, reported that private polls by the government's Central Office indicated that Conservatives have lost support from skilled workers previously loyal to the party.

Pinochet ends last day in power with call for unity

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — To supporters' cheers and opponents' cries of "murderer," Gen. Augusto Pinochet ended his last full day in power with a conciliatory call for national unity behind his elected successor.

The day included a snubbing of Pinochet by ten foreign leaders who delayed their arrivals until after he turns the presidency over to Patricio Aylwin Sunday. Only three heads of state arrived Saturday.

In a taped farewell speech, broadcast to the nation via television and radio Saturday night, Pinochet called on his countrymen "to unite their forces with those of the new authorities."

"The president who is assuming power has the right to expect, from each of us, a responsible attitude," said Pinochet, standing erect in a white dress army uni-

form decorated with the presidential sash.

"I want the best for my country and I always will be ready to serve her," Pinochet took power in September 1973 in a bloody coup that toppled the elected government of President Salvador Allende, an avowed Marxist.

He suspended congress and launched a harsh crackdown on leftists and dissidents that earned his government a worldwide reputation for systematic human rights abuses.

In 1988, a proposal to extend Pinochet's rule to 1997 was defeated in a referendum. That loss forced him to call elections last December.

Aylwin, a 71-year-old Christian Democrat backed by a coalition of 17 centrist and leftist parties, won 55 per cent of the vote.

U.S. civil rights activists mark anniversary of historic march

MONTGOMERY, Alabama (AP) — Civil rights activists commemorating the 25th anniversary of an historic black march began their final walk toward Alabama's capitol Saturday, chanting and singing their way through the cradle of the confederacy.

"We could not stop in Montgomery in 1965. We cannot stop today," said Jesse Jackson, a leading U.S. black rights activist and two-time presidential candidate. "We've got on to Washington, where there's the budget to shift national priorities."

A mostly black crowd of about 1,400 marchers began the 3.2-kilometre walk to downtown Montgomery, where 25,000 people gathered in 1965 to demand voting rights for blacks. In both marches they headed for the white-dominated capitol, where Jefferson Davis was sworn in as

president of the breakaway southern territory whose separation started the U.S. Civil War in the 1860s. The banner of the Confederacy, as the separatist territory was called, still flies over the building, despite protests by blacks, who ancestor were slaves in the old south.

Jackson and others, including Coretta Scott King, the widow of the Martin Luther King Jr., and U.S. Representative John Lewis were scheduled to speak on the capitol steps.

On Friday night, Actor Lou Gossett Jr. acted as master of ceremonies for a programme featuring musical styles ranging from Broadway to rap in an attempt to draw a huge crowd for Saturday's march.

Singer Melba Moore, rap artist Jesse West and civil rights activists comedian Dick Gregory were some of the celebrities on hand.

"You have to carry it on," Gossett told the cheering crowd of about 2,000 people. "You have to carry it in your hearts, in your lifestyles ... you have to think about it and carry it on."

In 1965, Peter, Paul and Mary, Harry Belafonte, Joan Baez and other entertainers performed the night before the march to help drum up a crowd.

This week about 150 people made the 80-kilometre walk along the four-lane highway linking Selma with Montgomery, and an organiser said it was an invigorating experience for young and old.

"I think we're talking about reclaiming the values of the past," said the Rev. Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. "I don't think the 1990s will get by like the 80s."

Indonesia executes convicted plotters

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Six men convicted of taking part in a failed coup attempt 25 years ago were executed Sunday, diplomatic sources and a human rights activist said.

No government officials were immediately available to confirm or deny that the long-delayed death sentences were carried out.

The six were executed by firing squad at 5:30 a.m. (2230 GMT Saturday), said Johannes C. Princen, a lawyer who is director of the Institute for the Defence of Human Rights.

"According to reliable sources who are always in touch with political prisoners, the six were executed at 5:30 this morning. They were taken out of the Cipinang Prison last Monday," Princen told the Associated Press.

Western diplomatic sources, who declined to be further identified, confirmed the latest executions. Four other death row veterans were executed in mid-February.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Try Sutrisno told reporters Saturday that the executions had "to wait for the right time." They were an internal matter to be settled by Indonesia, and outsiders had no right to meddle, Sutrisno said.

Those reported executed were convicted of plotting to overthrow the government of the late President Sukarno in 1965. Six army generals were killed in the uprising which was blamed on the Indonesian Communist Party.

If the executions took place as reported, it was 24 years to the day since Sukarno issued a letter of authority to Suharto to restore law and order in the strife-torn country.

The executions were protested last week by Princen's organisation, London-based Amnesty International, the 12-nation European Community (EC) and the government of the Netherlands.

Colombian ruling party prepares to choose presidential candidate

BOGOTÁ, Colombia (AP) — Colombia's ruling Liberal Party prepared to choose a presidential candidate during nationwide balloting Sunday for the bicameral legislature, mayoral races and other local offices.

"Technically we are nominating a candidate, but what we are really doing Sunday is electing a president," said Mauricio Vargas, managing editor of the weekly magazine Semana.

Vargas and other observers have given the opposition Conservative Party little chance of winning the presidency in scheduled May elections, unless a split arises in the Liberal party.

The search for a successor to President Virgilio Barco comes at a time when public opinion is divided over whether the government should diverge from Barco's unprecedented crackdown on cocaine traffickers.

Barco launched the anti-drug offensive in August. His administration extradited 14 suspects, killed

Medellin cocaine cartel leader Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha and seized hundreds of properties belonging to suspected traffickers.

Colombians in all regions will elect all 313 members of the nation's Bicameral Legislature, 9,042 city councilmen, 1,009 mayors, and 421 state assembly members. Balloting was to be conducted between 8 a.m. (1300 GMT) and 4 p.m. (2100 GMT).

In the nomination fight, polls showed candidate Hernando Duran Dussan running behind Cesar Gaviria, the former campaign chief for the late Sen. Luis Carlos Galan, an outspoken drug foe who was slain last Aug. 18.

Gaviria began campaigning for the nomination after Galan was shot and killed by drug traffickers last Aug. 18.

The 69-year-old Duran, however, can depend on the party's political machinery to guarantee him well over 1 million of the estimated 7 million votes to be cast.

Duran entered politics in the early 1940s and since then has held several posts including house representative and senator for his home state as well as ministerial positions and ambassadorships in five administrations.

With far less political experience than Duran, the 43-year-old Gaviria has tried to foster a populist image of himself as the successor of Galan, whose rebelliousness against the party establishment earned him a big following among independent-minded voters.

To overcome the strength of the party bosses, Gaviria needs a large turnout of those voters.

"The turnout is crucial for determining who will be president," said Maria Elvira Samper, Semana's editor-in-chief.

Another candidate, Ernesto Samper, is given little chance of winning, but could draw enough votes in a big turnout to gain significant influence over the direction of the party's policies.

Italy's Communist Party votes for radical change

BOLOGNA, Italy (R) — The Italian Communist Party, biggest in the Western World, voted overwhelmingly Sunday for a radical transformation into a new Social Democrat mass movement.

The change, agreed after four days of emotional debate at a special congress in Bologna, Italy's "red" stronghold, was forced by the collapse of old-style communism in Eastern Europe.

Italy's second largest party, known as the PCI, voted by 726 votes to 359 to begin the constituent phase of a new political organisation.

The PCI is expected to drop its hammer and sickle symbol and change its name.

A "yes" vote by 67 per cent of delegates representing 1.4 million Communists, was a personal victory for party leader Achille Occhetto, architect of a traumatic change ending 70 years of tradition in the PCI.

Occhetto, 54, fought successfully during the congress to avoid a fatal schism, despite bitter opposition from party veterans and hardliners.

Occhetto unveiled his proposal to a shocked party within days of the opening of the Berlin Wall last November.

He told the congress that not only the PCI but the whole European left must respond to a fundamental change in the world order.

Survey gives Bush low marks on environment

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. President George Bush, who campaigned as an environmentalist, received low marks from both conservation and business groups in a magazine survey.

Environmental groups gave Bush a barely passing mark of "D" on a report card, claiming that little progress has been made in key areas, while business groups gave him a "C" for opposite reasons, said the survey in the March 19 edition of U.S. News and World Report.

Business groups complained that the recent clean air bill, a compromise between the White House and congressional leaders, places too many restrictions and cost on companies in trying to control acid rain, smog and toxic chemicals. The bill still faces a vote in Congress.

from the apparent absence of a credible alternative to him and that there is no one anxious to take on his huge problems.

But the senior official said that without certain prompt economic improvements, Gorbachev could be in danger.

"Gorbachev in my view faces two kinds of dangers. One is the emergence of a credible alternative and that isn't on the immediate horizon."

"The other is such an unravelling that he loses control. That's just hard to know," he said. "What has happened in the Soviet Union is that the optimism that existed a couple of years ago has been replaced by a lot of pessimism."

"So now it becomes very important to be able to show some progress in the relatively near future — not that he's turned the corner, not that everything has changed — but at least in some important measure of how people judge how they're doing, they can see some improvement."

Ryzhkov is seen by the U.S. administration as a somewhat half-hearted reformer and is the author of an economic plan unveiled last December that was viewed in Washington as a failure in view of the challenges facing the Soviet Union.

Ryzhkov seen as potential challenger to Gorbachev

WASHINGTON (R) — Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov may be trying to position himself as a credible alternative to Mikhail Gorbachev if the Kremlin leader fails to deliver economic improvements soon, a senior U.S. official said.

The official, one of the U.S. administration's leading Soviet experts, said in an interview that Gorbachev could lose control of the situation in the Soviet Union if he did not show fairly prompt signs of economic success.

"The key for Gorbachev now is, he's got to begin to deliver something. He doesn't have to deliver a lot. What he has to do is to begin to show that he has the wherewithal and the ability to produce a better future," the official said.

"I think Ryzhkov is trying to position himself as the credible alternative ... I wouldn't write him off. He might still be a kind of force looming there," he added.

Other Soviet experts believe Gorbachev has eliminated most political threats to his position and was about to secure even greater powers by having himself elected by the Supreme Soviet as executive president for a five-year term.

Some State Department experts believe Gorbachev benefits

Victorious powers, Germans to discuss path to unity

BONN (R) — The World War II victors and the Germans they conquered start working this week towards a unique goal — the peaceful reunification of a nation shattered by defeat, torn by the cold war and now looming as the next superstate.

The wartime allies — the United States, Soviet Union, Britain and France — meet in Bonn Wednesday as once omnipotent powers now hoping to channel a unity drive they cannot control.

At the same round table will be West Germany, an economic powerhouse second only to the United States, and an East Germany still stumbling through the ruins of collapsed Communism.

The talks, due to wind up by autumn, aim to plot out the security contours of a unified Germany, including its military status, the border with Poland and the future of Berlin.

If all goes well, the result will be a state of 78 million that overshadows Europe, ranking

with the United States and Japan as an economic superpower but — unlike the German war machines of the past — living in peace with its neighbours.

"These talks will be the most important since the war," one Western diplomat commented. "The walls dividing Germany are falling down and we have to clean up the pieces."

Senior officials will first hold a one-day meeting, called by Bonn to calm growing unease abroad about its unification plans, and prepare higher-level sessions to start after East Germany's first free elections on March 18.

Following the "two-plus-four" format agreed in Ottawa last month, the four powers will first hear a proposed agenda worked out by the two Germanys in their first unity talks last Friday.

At some point, foreign ministers will take over and

complete a unity programme to be unveiled at a summit of the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe this autumn.

Several states that suffered at the hands of the Third Reich, especially Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy, have demanded some part in the "two-plus-four" talks.

But the four power powers, who have retained responsibility for all of Germany ever since they defeated the Nazis in 1945, look set to allow only six seats at the table even if they frequently consult the others demanding a say.

This carefully-planned programme is meant to replace a World War II peace conference that the cold war blocked and now Bonn, fearing the role of a defeated power that becomes fair game for exorbitant reparations demands, flatly refuses to consider.

The biggest challenge will be to make a reliable neighbour out

of two split for 40 years into arsenals of the cold war and tripwires for a nuclear armageddon.

Bonn and its allies want the new state to stay in NATO and have made a key concession in advance — agreeing to keep troops from the Western alliance out of present-day Germany — to make the proposal more palatable to the Kremlin.

But the Soviet Union, an empire starting to crumble within its own borders, seems deeply worried about the simply giving away the allied state it set up after the Red Army seized Berlin.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev "cannot afford a full-blown debate about 'who lost Germany?'" Another envoy said. "He has to say he wants a neutral Germany."

Leading western officials, including NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner, are confident Moscow will give

in because a neutral Germany would be less stable than one in NATO.

But, the diplomat said, its price could be huge cuts in the 400,000 foreign troops in West Germany, with less reduction of the 350,000 Soviet forces in the East.

Moscow could demand a nuclear-free Fatherland, he added, or try to get the West to foot the bill for Soviet troops stationed in East Germany during the transition to full sovereignty.

The Kremlin might also insist the nationalisations and land reforms its military administration carried out after the war in East Germany be made permanent, as East Berlin's lame-duck Prime Minister Hans Modrow has urged it to do.

"It all depends on whether they want to play tough or not," the diplomat said. "We won't know that until after March 18."

COLUMN 8

Algeria to promote skiing in the Sahara

ALGIERS (R) — Skiers frustrated by the lack of snow on European slopes this winter may soon have an alternative — the giant sand dunes of Algeria's Sahara Desert. Ten skiing enthusiasts from the Algerian Skiing and Mountain Sports Federation have pioneered what they hope will become a booming new tourist and recreational attraction.

The Algerian News Agency (APS) said Sunday the federation had organised a series of trail runs in Algeria's ergs, huge masses of shifting Saharan dunes, to pinpoint the best slopes. "Ski-erg", as the federation has dubbed it, can be practised 12 months of the year with ordinary skis and poles, albeit in temperatures that exceed 50 degrees Celsius in summer. The Algerian skiers have begun scouting dunes in the region of Al Menia, 900 kilometres south of Algiers, on foot and camel-back. But they found that downhill speeds were only about a third of those on snow, suggesting that special skis may have to be developed. The federation plans to organise dunes skiing competitions, and even dreams of resort complex at the best slopes.

Oliver Stone tops directors' awards

NEW YORK (AP) — Born: of the Fourth of July director Oliver Stone won top honours from his peers as the Directors Guild of America (DGA) toasted its own in a ceremony that's often a preview for Best-Director Oscar. Stone was voted Best Director of a 1989 feature film as awards were announced at New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel. A simultaneous ceremony film is an account of Ron Kovic's transformation from an unthinking patriot to an unselfish protester after a Vietnam war injury left him a paraplegic. Among the others honoured were the directors of TV's Murphy Brown and L.A. Law series. The movie business pays special attention to the prestigious DGA trophy, since the winner almost always repeats as Best Director in the Academy Awards. The guild's best-directed film usually receives the Best Picture Oscar. In addition to Stone, those nominated for Best Director of a feature film were Woody Allen for Crimes and Misdemeanors, Rob Reiner for When Harry Met Sally, Phil Alden Robinson for Field of Dreams, and Peter Weir for Dead Poets Society.

Welsh woman finds message in bottle from New York

NOLTON HAVEN, Wales (AP) — "I need help. Please rescue me. I am on the ship Scandinavian Star." Fiona Kenyon found that message on Soggy paper inside a liquor bottle that had washed ashore near her home after last week's fierce storms. It went on to read: "If you receive this message, please mail it to this address and receive a surprise." The message appeared to have been written by a child and included a drawing of a ship. The note, broken off in the middle, was signed by Beth Rosefield of Levittown, New York, and the street address was lost in the soggy fold of the paper, Miss Kenyon said. But Miss Kenyon, a sea captain's daughter, said she mailed the girl a package addressed to her in Levittown with the zip code. "I hope it gets there," she said. "I sent her back a package with all sorts of information about Wales" including pictures, she said.

Global weather (major world cities)

| | MIN. | MAX. | |
|--------------|------|------|--------------|
| | °C | °F | °F Weather |
| AMSTERDAM | 09 | 48 | 16 Clr |
| ATHENS | 18 | 64 | 25 Cloudy |
| BANGKOK | 18 | 64 | 25 Cloudy |
| BANGKOK | 24 | 75 | 33 Clr |
| Buenos Aires | 19 | 66 | 28 Cloudy |
| CAIRO | 10 | 50 | 16 Cloudy |
| CHICAGO | 04 | 38 | 16 82 Rn |
| COPENHAGEN | 01 | 31 | 08 43 Cloudy |
| DENVER | 09 | 48 | 13 56 Clear |
| NEW YORK | 08 | 42 | 55 Clear |
| GENEVA | 09 | 48 | 18 62 Rn |
| HONG KONG | 18 | 64 | 25 Clr |
| ISTANBUL | 08 | 37 | 10 50 Rn |
| LONDON | 10 | 50 | 15 58 Cloudy |
| LOS ANGELES | 11 | 52 | 17 63 Clear |
| MADRID | 13 | 55 | 66 Cloudy |
| MECCA | 23 | 73 | 66 Cloudy |
| MONTREAL | -06 | 21 | 05 41 Cloudy |
| MOSCOW | -03 | 27 | 03 37 Cloudy |
| NEW DELHI | 15 | 59 | 30 36 Clear |
| NEW YORK | 08 | 42 | 53 53 Cloudy |
| PARIS | 08 | 46 | 18 64 Clear |
| ROME | 04 | 39 | 20 68 Clear |
| SYDNEY | 20 | 68 | 79 Cloudy |
| TOKYO | 08 | 47 | 63 Clear |
| YOKOHAMA | 14 | 57 | 68 Clear |

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